

# SCIENCE FICTION AGE

Spielberg's Dino Blockbuster:  
**JURASSIC PARK!**

**PIERS ANTHONY:**

Dragon's Revenge

**SPACE WAR!**

By Rick Shelley

**H.R. GIGER'S  
Alien Invasion**

**TYRANT  
OF TIME**

By Charles Sheffield

**ALIENS &  
SPACESHIPS:**

The Art of Jim Burns

**CYBERGOD IN L.A.**

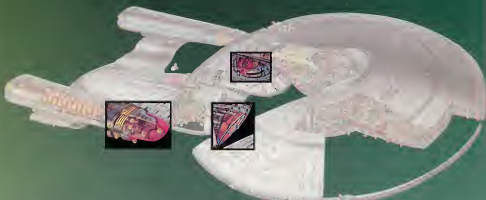
By Ernest Hogan

Scientific Frontiers:  
**CAN WE LIVE FOREVER?**



ISSN 0895-9465  
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JULY 1993





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**COVER:** The barriers between the species can be breached, as shown by a marauding alien's pained visage. Art by Michael Whelan.  
**ABOVE:** In Stephen Spielberg's latest blockbuster *Jurassic Park*, Joseph Mazzello awakens to find one of the film's colossal "state-of-the-art" dinosaurs. Story page 18.

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Working inside the hospital's violent ward, Ethan Drake had grown used to dealing with his patient's demons—but he hadn't counted on coming face to face with a dragon. A rare short story from the best-selling novelist.

# The SCI-FI VIDEO CORNER



## BARBARELLA - QUEEN OF THE GALAXY

Jane Fonda plays the space adventures, stranded on a frightening planet. Barreling alien creatures every step of the way, she also finds time for unbridled sexual pleasures. Made in 1968 this was one of Fonda's first films.

#B107 Approx. 93 Minutes \$19.95

## BUCK ROGERS

Jan Butler Galbra in the greatest space adventure ever - the original Buck Rogers. This 12 episode, double cassette set the standards for intergalactic action and mind-bending special effects! Held in respected criticism for 500 years by Rinceau yes, Buck Rogers is discovered in the 25th century by a strange planet. Buck quickly learns that criminal assassins, led by Killa Kain, will destroy the earth unless he can devise a plan! Filled with action and adventure you won't want to miss this serial which started the Sci-Fi craze.

#B036 Approx. 237 minutes \$29.95



## CAT WOMEN OF THE MOON

3-D Kittis and chicks as Moon Rocket 4 and its crew drive menacing mecha before tackling down on the Moon's barren surface. These intergalactic kitties are the perfect hosts, but the scorching post about tells you something's wrong with this litter of kittens.

Contains 4 pairs of 3-D glasses.

#B124 Approx. 64 minutes \$19.95

## THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL

When we first started putting this collection together, this video was an everyone's list as a must to include. Made in 1951 and starring Michael Rennie, Patricia Neal and Hugh Marlowe, this film finds Rennie as a visitor from another planet who is sent to warn earthlings of their self-destructive ways.

#B139 Approx. 92 minutes \$19.95



## FANTASTIC PLANET

This enthralling animated fantasy is about a future earth not by huge like creatures who keep humans as pets. A group of humans stage a daring revolt to gain their freedom but their actions initiate a series of repressive acts to maintain control. This imaginative film was nominated awards of Festival in both Europe and the United States.

#B673 Approx. 72 minutes \$19.95



## ISAAC ASIMOV: VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

This fun and exciting video lets us look into the future through the eyes of the most prolific Science Fiction writer of the 20th Century. This is the first video that explores the boundary between science fiction and science fact. Visions Of The Future was set to be a series but was never finished because of Asimov's death in 1992. Even though this series was not completed, we thought it should be released. It features Asimov's last interview and will live on as a tribute to his magnificent mind.

#B175 Approx. 45 minutes \$29.95

## KNIGHTRIDERS

From the creator of Night Of The Living Dead, Convoy, and Tetsuro From the Dark Side, comes this cult classic. Ed Harris stars as the captivating tale of modern-day bikers who look and act like knights of the Round Table. Fierce fighting an exciting stall stands prove who is bravest, who is strongest, who deserves to be king. "Bitch, ripe fantasy... Quite a ride."

— J.S. Magazine

#B321 Approx. 147 minutes \$19.95



## PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE

An unintentionally hilarious film in which aliens from outer space invade earth and attack it by raising the dead. Stars Bela Lugosi.

#B724 Approx. 70 minutes \$19.95

## PROJECT A-KO

This cartoon feature is the best in Japan's A-KO is a normal teenager... except that while her distinctive frame her superhuman strength. Direct from Japan this is one of the best-selling features and it has never been offered at this low price. Dubbed in English. Contains: Contains nudity.

#B133 Approx. 66 minutes \$29.95



## ROBOT MONSTER

Following a devastating nuclear war, a gorilla wearing a dome store dives below and tries to wipe out the few surviving humans. Don't miss the gorilla communicating with its home planet by talking to a bubble blowing machine!

#B137 Approx. 63 minutes \$29.95

## ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW

This wild mix of classic horror/sci-fi and outrageous fantasy is one of the most popular cult films of all time. Stars Tim Curry, Barry Bostwick and Susan Sarandon. Limited quantities available.

#B750 Approx. 100 minutes \$19.95



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Dear Mr. Edelman:

Robert Silverberg's essay (May 1993) was a poignant and perceptive reminder of fate. For it is fate, chance, and mere accident of birth whether we live in a Science Fiction Age or a Stone Age. Which part of this planet we are born on determines the nature of our problems. On one part of Earth our problems might include overcharged credit cards and the difficulties of programming a VCR. On another section of the world, obstacles may be disease, drought, pestilence and famine. Only when the wonders of science are no longer segregated about the globe, but are distributed among all humankind, will we truly live in a Science Fiction Age.

Timothy Walters

Dear Mr. Edelman:

Ben Bova's story "Thy Kingdom Come" really hit a nerve. I can understand why Jade Diamond, under the "laws" of the street, couldn't love Vic Pasquale back. It would've been a shortcut to "suicide" by Jade's "Daddy" and his goons. Ben Bova really knows how to put his readership deep in all that decay in fictional future Philadelphia. God grant his prophecies don't come true.

L. D.

*Science fiction has long given us a variety of futures that while they're nice places to visit, we definitely wouldn't want to live there. The power of George Orwell's pessimistic novel 1984 helped ensure that the future described in its pages would not take place. Let's hope that Ben Bova's future Philadelphia also stays a thing of fiction only.*

Dear Editor:

So this wasn't the promised reminiscence of Dangerous Visions. So what? Harlan Ellison's "Toiling in the Dreamtime" was a fascinating look at the creative process. The relationship between writing and dreams has been commented on before, but Ellison somehow found a fresh perspective. It was interesting to hear the genesis of stories like "The Function of Dream Sleep" and "Lonely-ache."

It is Ellison's willingness to reveal himself, to be upfront with his readers, that makes this essay stand out. Though it is true that science fiction is the stuff of dreams, the ideas come from a very human place.

John Thompson

*Harlan Ellison's unique vision is always welcome. Fous of his writing will be pleased to note that his recent short story "The Man Who Raised Christopher Columbus*

*his Ashore" has been chosen to appear in the forthcoming Best American Short Stories, making him one of the few authors who come out of our genre to be so honored.*

Dear Editor,

After reading the letters, it is obvious that there is a lot of confusion. Concerning the Fantasy/Science Fiction classification: Science Fiction and Sword and Sorcery are sub-genres of Fantasy. Fantasy is defined in the American Heritage Dictionary as "The creative imagination or a product of the imagination." Anything not proven to be reality is fantasy. Any futuristic story is fantasy. Einstein's unproven theories are fantasies!

Grab a dictionary, you readers, and get it right. If you let publishers warp words for their own public relations needs, there will never be an end to these misunderstandings. Perhaps we shouldn't waste time with this exacting factiousness and simply buy the publications, like *Science Fiction Age*, that we most enjoy.

Robert Sutter III

Dear Scott,

Where is state-of-the-art speculative fiction today? Who is consistently writing or publishing it? What's happening in 1993 to the stories that would have at one time appeared in *Orbit*, or *New Worlds*, or *Quark*, or *Dangerous Visions*, or any one of a number of magazines and anthologies which allowed writers the freedom to do their best?

Those stories seldom appear in SF magazines today, leading me to believe that the stories are being rejected across the board by editors unwilling to respect the intelligence of their audience, and ending up in the back of file cabinets never to be seen again. Or worse, not being written at all because there is no ready market for them.

Some things never change.

Bryan Chollin

*Excellent questions, Bryan, ones that I have also long asked myself. Where can you find the stories that push the envelope of SF? Stories such as Paul Di Filippo's "Anne," Barry N. Malzberg's "Andante Labyrinth" and others would have seemed quite at home in the titles you've mentioned. I am convinced that the cutting edge of SF appears every two months in the pages of Science Fiction Age.*

*Readers—While we can't respond to every letter, rest assured that all letters are read! Please let us know how we're doing at Letters to the Editor, Science Fiction Age, P.O. Box 369, Damascus, MD 20872.*

MARK HINTZ  
Publisher

CARL A. GNAM, JR.  
Editorial Director

SCOTT EDELMAN  
Editor

RONALD M. STEVENS  
Art Director

DELINDA HANLEY  
DARCY SREEBNY  
Editorial Assistants

Contributors:

Arfan Andrews, Piers Anthony, Eric T. Baker, Michael Bishop, Ben Bova, Adam-Troy Castro, Doug Chzeem, Ann Crispin, Ronald Anthony Cross, Vincent Di Fate, Paul Di Filippo, Harlan Ellison, Craig Shaw Gardner, Connie Hirsch, Al Kamajian, John Kessel, Geoffrey A. Landis, Annie Lansford, Harry Malzberg, Pat Morissey, Irena Nelson, Gene O'Neill, Jerry Foamelle, Bruce Sterling, Charles Sheffield, Don Webb, Michael Whelan.

DIANE BONIFANTI  
Business Manager

DORI GRIFFITH  
AMANDA SMITH  
Office Assistants

CARI WYNNE  
Production Manager

JULIAN CHRISTOPHER  
Production Assistant

STEVE DORBOWSKI  
Circulation Manager

WARNER PUBLISHER SERVICES  
International Distribution

Newstand Consultants  
MAGAZINE COMMUNICATION  
CONSULTANTS  
Ralph Pericelli/Twin Billman

Advertising Offices:  
EAST COAST & MIDWEST

Display Advertising  
MARK HINTZ

Advertising Associate  
LESLIE FARR

457 Carlisle Dr., Herndon, VA 22070  
703-471-1556 / FAX: 703-471-1550

WEST COAST  
BARBARA BUCK  
JE Publishers Rep. Co.  
3415 S. Sepulveda • Suite 520  
Los Angeles, CA 90034  
310 572-7272/FAX: 310 572-7264

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

Picture Credits: Artlink/Univis: 18, 20, 25; Louis Black: 21; Jim Burns/ARENA: 4, 62, 64, 66, 67; Jim Burns/Univis: 68; Bruce/Univis: 74; D.C. Comics: 75; Dana Gerstler: 20 (Editor); Paramount Pictures: 24; ROC Books/David Nodding: 10.

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0-86677-621-3 Fantasy/Original Hardcover \$26.00 (\$29.95 in Canada) Mar. '93

## AN EARTHLY CROWN (Sword of Heaven #1) by Kate Elliott

The Jaran people, led by Ilya Bakhtian and his Earth-born wife Tess, are sweeping across their planet on a campaign of conquest. But even more important than this war is the battle for control about to ensue between Ilya and Tess' brother, the ruler of this sector of space.

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## HIS CONQUERING SWORD (Sword of Heaven #2) by Kate Elliott

Charles Sorensen, leader of the rebellion against the alien Chapalli Empire has come to the planet Rhu for two reasons: to reclaim his sister Tess, and to decipher long hidden and invaluable data about the Mushai, the legendary Chapalli who once led his own rebellion against the Empire. But what hope is there of overthrowing an Empire that was thriving before humans learned to walk erect?

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## THE SWORD AND THE LION by Roberta Gray

For centuries, the city-state of Ghezrat has survived unceasing war. But now an enormous army is preparing to take Ghezrat by storm. Yet even as Ghezrat prepares to fight, one young warrior woman has a terrifyingly real vision of the city's defenses breached by magic, her home destroyed and her world changed forever...

0-86677-558-2 Fantasy/Original \$4.99 (\$5.99 in Canada) June '93



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By Scott Edelman

## Today, dinosaurs are far from extinct, and maybe they never were.



The great lizards are gone, but if we pull together, the human race may not have to go the way of the dinosaur. A still from the 1969 film, *The Valley of the Gwangi*.

**T**O SCIENTISTS, THE DINOSAURS ARE EXTINCT. BUT to the dreamers, and this year, to the commercializers as well, the dinosaurs are far from dead. I've been thinking about dinosaurs a great deal lately. The world is making sure of that. This looks to be the biggest year for dinosaurs since Little Nemo's Winsor McKay gave birth to the first animated dinosaur by hand-painting frame by frame the creature he dubbed Gertie.

*Jurassic Park*, Stephen Spielberg's film of Michael Crichton's best-selling novel, may revolutionize the dinosaur movie, and this issue's film column will fill you in on all the details. Not one but two hardcover dinosaur art books have recently appeared—*Dinotopia* and *The Ultimate Dinosaur*. As you learned last issue, Wayne Barlowe is hard at work on a dinosaur ABC book, and Ray Bradbury's dinosaur classic tales are appearing in comic book adaptations. Every issue of *Science Fiction Age* has carried news about one dinosaur project or another. This, it seems, is the year that dinosaur enthusiasts can savor a wide variety of new and quality material.

Why this fascination science fiction has with dinosaurs, which this year is overflowing to conquer the world at large? It all begins, I believe, with our fascination with things larger than ourselves. When we look at elephants, it is not the floppy ears or long nose that captivates us, and when we look at whales, it is not their trick of blowing plumes of water through the top of their head that keeps us staring. What has us spellbound is the poetry of size. Looking through the bars of the cage, or off the side of a ship, we measure ourselves against them, and feel small, and remember our own mortality. Creatures of such size are biological Grand Canyons.

Studying such living beasts, I always come back to the

dinosaurs, creatures far larger than any we know of in this world. I always feel cheated somehow contemplating those great lizards, because time and fate have conspired to make sure that dinosaurs were long dead before humanity ever walked the Earth. Going to museums, looking at the skeletal reconstructions, I imagine them as they would be fleshed out and full of movement. And I foolishly imagine that they would be my friends.

I am not the only one. The history of science fiction is filled with images of dinosaurs as nothing more than overgrown housepets, saving humans from harm, fetching slippers, their ancient faces looking pleased to see us near, and looking to us as comrades instead of snacks. I think that is why a recent traveling museum exhibit proved to be so popular. A contingent of life-sized audioanimatronic dinosaurs toured the major science museum circuit.

I think those of us who visited that exhibit (and some of us went more than once) did so to be able to pretend for a few brief moments that we were co-existing with the dinosaurs. As the cleverly disguised machines went through their pre-programmed motions, long necks swooping among the reeds, or surprisingly nimble bodies running out of harm's way, we acted as voyeurs, feeling as if we'd hijacked a time machine to spy on those who died before we were born. The truth is that if there were free-roaming dinosaurs in our day, it would be far more likely that being trampled underfoot would be a cause of death ranking up there with car crashes and cigarette smoking, yet there is something in the human heart that continues to hope otherwise.

As we think about the dinosaurs, I also think that part of what we feel is pride, an unearned hubris, for after all, we have survived, while they have died. As individuals, we want to take credit for that. Our species, for all its weakness of the flesh, for all its comparatively inconsequential size, has lingered on, whereas the dinosaurs have long failed. We like to think that it is because we are better than they were, when in actuality, our dominance of the Earth has been due less to our intelligence than it has to an accident of evolution.

Which brings me to my final point, and one of the true hidden secrets of why we are so drawn to contemplation of the dinosaurs. We, as a race, want to believe we won't be like the dinosaurs, fated to disappear from the Earth. In thinking of the dinosaurs, we want to believe that in our future, we won't be left only as hidden bones for some other future more successful species to find. We hope that we will figure it all out with our scientific tools, and that we won't be defeated by this planet as so many species have been.

We like to think we're smart enough to avoid making the mistakes of the dinosaurs. Well, we could be, if we tried harder. But smart's aren't everything. Our only hope is if we can learn to start living a lot wiser—and kinder—as well. □



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By Lionel Fenn

### *Dr. Dimension* returns us to those thrilling (and silly) SF days of yesteryear.



In *Dr. Dimension*, the classic mad scientist, Demetrios Demopoulos, swirls through a hole between alternate realities. Art by David Mattingly.

**I**N THE OLD DAYS, THEY USED TO SHOOT COLLABORATORS in places like France and Norway. We here in the U.S. are much more civilized. We make them write books together, then watch them shoot each other while deciding whose name goes first on the cover. A perfect example is *Dr. Dimension* (ROC, 1993, 288 pp. paperback, \$4.99) by John DeChance and David Bischoff. John DeChance, as you all know, is the author of a number of spiffy SF/fantasy novels, probably the most well-known of which are set in *Castle Perilous*; David Bischoff's equally spiffy work also spans both genres, and more years than he probably cares to count. Both gentlemen are no strangers to humor in fiction, nor are they strangers to literary collaboration.

So how did they happen to come together on this particular work? I haven't the vaguest idea. I do know, however, that the result is a *Pretty Good Thing*.

While I was reading this book, I tried to figure out why parts of it were funny and parts of it weren't. It was very distressing, I mean, if I was smiling at the parts that were supposed to be funny, and not smiling at the things that weren't supposed to be funny, then I guess things were okay; but if I was smiling at parts that weren't supposed

to be funny, and not smiling at parts that were supposed to be funny, and ambiguous about all the other stuff, then there's either something amiss with the novel, or amiss with me, or a little of both, or maybe a lot of one and not much of the other. I got dizzy.

After a quick lie-down, I realized that humor is funny in a funny sort of way. That is, there ain't nobody who's going to laugh at everything you think is funny, because they don't think that everything you think is funny, is funny. But they'll laugh their kneecaps off at some other stuff. Maybe even the stuff you don't think is funny.

So I stopped getting dizzy and decided that *Dr. Dimension* is pretty funny, all in all, especially for those readers who think it's funny. The rest of you are probably a lost cause and ought to lie down for a while. What it is, too, is a fond recreation of pulp-style adventures, complete with enough exclamation points to build a fence around Rush Limbaugh, and the kind of science that looks terrific on paper, yet tends, in reality, to blow planets up.

It works like this: In 1939, Dr. Demetrios Demopoulos and his assistants—the luscious (of course) Diane Derry and the moderately dense (naturally) Troy Talbot—are at Flitheimer University (believe me, I didn't make this up), working on an experiment that, for various decidedly scientific reasons, isn't going to succeed without major Divine intervention. University politics being what they were at the time, the intrepid trio are also confronted with funding problems, Soviet spies, Nazi spies, ballet lovers, and—pulp's being pulp—a dose of Divine intervention that isn't Divine, that is.

Before anyone can say Jack Robinson on account of he wasn't born yet, the too-smart-for-his-time doctor (whose first name should have been Randy, since he was; constantly), his assistants, and an inadvertent handful of others, are thrust into what may or may not be an alternate universe, an alternate time zone, or an alternate reality, depending on how you look at it and what drugs you're using. They definitely, however, end up in the middle of Space (measured side to side), which at the moment happens to be the battleground for a couple of Super Races who don't like each other very much, and don't much care for the humans, either.

It would be superfluous to add that along the way, they meet a non-human Henny Youngman (redundant, I know) guide, bad guys that wear Groucho Marx masks, good guys that remind me of James Cagney, and other guys who, in the course of events, are weird. This doesn't count the human bad guys, by the way, who are really testy about being up-staged.

The problem, of course, is getting Dr. Demmy and his friends safely back to Earth. The other problem is, nobody else ever heard of it. The third problem is too numerous to mention, but trust me, it's a pip.

So thanks to Henny Youngman, our heroes manage to extricate themselves from this battle, end up with the

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Prooms (hereinafter known as the Space Bad Guys), and must, because the Human Bad Guys kind of identify with the Space Bad Guys except they don't have the spiffy Groucho Marx masks, escape both evil forces so they might align themselves with the Pizons, the Space Good Guys who wear silk suits, black ties, and sound like my cousin Vinnie. Thereupon, they, the Human Good Guys, must in the true spirit of cooperation help the Pizons against the Prooms so they, the Human Good Guys, can return to Earth and use their extensive new knowledge to help defeat the Nazis, who are the Earth Human Bad Guys. Or maybe just get back to Earth. Preferably in one piece. Which works.

If I tell you any more, I'm gonna get dizzy again.

Naturally, because pulps were what they were, and humor is what it is, there are a couple of things I wish weren't here, and are: I don't think it's necessary to constantly point out dialogue puns by saying things like "She winced/groaned/grimaced at the pun." The way I figure it, the reader either gets it or he doesn't. Someone will. Why bother using neon signs to pinpoint a joke? And like much humor, some of the bits go on far too long. Mr DeChancie and Mr. Bischoff had an obvious good time working on this; maybe too good. Somebody should have stood over them with a whip.

On the other hand, this sucker (reviewer's technical term meaning pages 1 to the end) moves! Pure pulp action, all the character types you'd expect, and enough cliffhanger endings to keep you in Saturday matinees for a year. The jokes are deliberately awful (or brilliant, depending on your taste), the coincidences exactly right for this type of story, and the villainess, Vivian Vernon, reminds me just enough of the Dragon Lady to make my heart go all a flutter. And if you don't know who the Dragon Lady is, you're too young for this book, go away.

Naturally, like all good pulp serials (in print or on the screen), this one doesn't end. Well, it ends, but it doesn't. Only kind of. In a pulpy sort of way.

Now, one might think this is a crass commercial ploy to force you to buy the next book in the series so that the authors can get rich and famous and not have to do this kind of thing anymore; or it might be exactly right for the book this is, and the authors don't want to be rich and famous, they just want to write more in the series; or the authors do indeed want to get rich, the hell with famous, and they also want to write more books in the series because they're having too much fun and don't want to stop.

I strongly suspect the readers will make them a few bucks, won't let them stop, and will stuff their mailboxes with suggestions for more jokes. Awful suggestions. Really awful. And if DeChancie and Bischoff have any class, they'll use every one.

After all, humor is funny, in a funny sort of way. □



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**Glory Season**, by David Brin, a Bantam Spectra Book, 1993, 576 pp., hardcover, \$29.95.

In his last book, *Earth*, David Brin examined humanity and its effects on its home planet. Now in *Glory Season*, Brin examines a world where the human race has used genetic engineering to transform itself.

A thousand years before the book opens, the philosopher-professor Lysos and her followers abandoned the Hominid Phylum to seek a world where they could create a stable society in order to provide the greatest peace and happiness for the greatest number of people. They came to the world of Stratos and began their experiment. The story of *Glory Season* is the measure of how well they succeeded.

Lysos decided that the human society with the greatest stability would be achieved by creating a pastoral world of farmers and handicraftsmen, where the same people filled the same jobs for generation after generation. Philosophically uncomfortable with true immortality, Lysos opted instead for the pseudo-immortality of parthenogenesis—mothers giving birth to daughter clones. This method of procreation would have allowed the people of Stratos to do without men entirely, except for the discovery that parthogenetic pregnancies in mammals require at least some male-processed genes for proper fetal development. Thus, the women of Stratos were engineered so that during the the planet's short summer, they could conceive in the familiar human fashion, allowing them to give birth to sons and unwanted daughters.

For *Glory Season*, Brin departs from his usual practice of telling his story through several point-of-view characters and instead uses only one. She is Maia, a 15 (Earth)-year-old summer daughter of the Lamai clan of clones. Summer daughters are known as "vars." Although they are initially raised by their birth clan, most vars are turned loose to fend for themselves in their fifth Stratos year. This is Maia's situation when the book opens. With her twin, Leie, she has been cast into the hard world with only her meager savings and a practical Lamai education.

Vars and men make up about 20 percent of Stratos' population. Mastery of the commercial sailing ships is a traditional monopoly of men, and boys who come of age are usually taken into the sea-going guilds. Vars, however, must make their own niche, creating their own careers in a society where clone clans have already been established in their niches for generations. Predictably, most vars spend their lives working the hard, dangerous, and unpleasant jobs that no

clone wants. Maia shares every var's dream of finding a new niche and founding her own clone clan, but as the book begins, her only skills seem to be that she is athletic, stubborn, and very brave.

Maia's is a classic coming-of-age story, but she is not the true star of the book. *Glory Season* is a novel about the society of Stratos.

The book has more to do with Lysos' philosophy and legacy than it does with Maia's growth as character. Like Laura in *Islands in the Net* or Shevek in *The Dispossessed*, Maia's primary job as a character is to show us her world. This she does with dogged determination, despite the fact that she spends more time as a prisoner than the Count of Monte Cristo and more time drugged or unconscious than even James Bond.

Stratos is a fully-imagined world, and every twist of Maia's fate reveals another facet of how humanity would adapt to Lysos' world. Maia and Leie begin at the bottom of Stratos' social order, forced to take working passage on a pair of colliers just to leave the provincial city of their birth. From these humble beginnings, Maia manages to travel by sash-hoese, electric train, her own feet, and lots of sailing ships over most of the world. Each leg of the journey takes her to a slightly higher level of society, and each success makes her a little more important in the events that propel her.

Although Maia is little aware of it at the story's beginning, Stratos is in a time of relative turmoil. An emissary from the Hominid Phylum has arrived, bringing the message that the world's long isolation is over. As clans, factions, and movements plot and counter-plot to turn events to their advantage, the action sweeps Maia up and carries her along. As she finds herself allied to or prisoner of one group after another, Maia (and the reader) has her world reinterpreted for her according to each group's biases.

Actually, the greatest flaw with *Glory Season* as a novel is Brin's decision to show us his creation solely through Maia's eyes. Maia has neither politics nor any philosophy, yet she is constantly surrounded by people who are deeply committed to, and willing to kill and die for, their beliefs. Thus, all the strong political feelings of the novel come to the reader secondhand through Maia's reactions to these other characters.

Which is not to say that Maia is not allowed to feel, merely that her emotions are bound up solely in her own achievements and the fates of the three people she loves. Even as the world teeters on its foundations around her, Maia never stops wondering if she will find a niche.

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Stylistically, Brin is his usual commanding self. The prose is alive with details that give Stratos not only the look, but also the texture and taste of a world familiar and yet unexpectedly alien. The chase scenes have real suspense, the fight scenes produce real excitement, and the prison scenes contain real boredom. To top them off, the novel's climax is actually its best part, although there are still 50 more pages to read once it has passed.

If you have been waiting 10 years to find out the fate of the Streaker and its dolphin crew, you may take heart in the jacket blurb's announcement that *Brightness Reef*, the sequel to *Starline Rising*, is in progress. Until that book is finished, however, *Glory Season* is a welcome reminder of David Brin's craft and imagination.

**Eric T. Baker**

*Sword and Sorcerers X*, edited by Marion Zimmer Bradley, DAW, 1993, 285 pp., paperback, \$4.99.

Marion Zimmer Bradley, as editor and anthologist, has started the careers of many of today's most successful fantasy writers, stylistically as diverse as Jennifer Roberson, Tanith Lee, and Mercedes Lackey. As a writer, Bradley is well known for the *Darkover* series, many fantasy novels, and her break-out Arthurian epic *The Mists of Avalon*, which brought her readers from outside the genre. With these credentials and her well-known bias against the typical elves, fairies, dragons and damsels-in-distress sort of fantasy, you would be right to expect this anthology to be full of well-known and first-time writers who have written stories that are both original and action-oriented.

I enjoy anthologies for the pleasure of dipping into another world for the length of a bus ride or until the pasta water is boiling. This collection contains enough variety of style and tone to make each story unique and not just another cookie-cutter fantasy. Each story is a satisfying bite.

This is an anthology of "heroic fantasy" and as such, action-adventure stories dominate, ones without unnecessary backstories or ambiguous endings. The settings are those worthy of kings, knights, wizards and magicians—heroic battles and quests. The 29 stories are strong on plot, filled with problems that need to be solved or troubles that must be escaped. Magic and sword-fighting are understandably the primary means to these ends, but the plot's twists and turns in each story are original.

Bradley states in her introduction that in-

spiring the reader with a "sense of wonder" is a requirement for each story. Also, each story features a strong female protagonist, but there are some good male sidekicks here as well. A surprisingly high body-count also exists, for these are not passive or introspective women heroines. Those who like this type of fantasy will find themselves enjoying most of these stories.

Mercedes Lackey's funny "Friendly Fire" stood out in a positive way when compared with the other stories. The story's most unusual aspect is the rich and thorough description of the economic background. Too often fantasy stories revolve either around the upper classes, who don't need to worry about money, or else around adventures on quests for treasure and riches. Ordinary people earning a living are rarely described. In this story, two women traders acquire a bad-luck talisman by mistake and thereafter, everything that can go wrong does. Once they discover their predicament, they also find that they can't just lose the coin or trick someone into taking it. The coin must be accepted willingly. Additionally our protagonists are unwilling to mislead good people into accepting the bad luck coin. Their solution and their tribulations along the way are clever and funny.

**This collection contains enough variety of style and tone to make each story unique and not just another cookie-cutter fantasy.**

The "Limwitch" by Rebekah Jensen, a first sale, is another humorous piece. In this story, a very young witch must acquire her familiar. This short-short story suggests that if after a good try you don't succeed, perhaps you should do something else. With a tale that is funny, original, clever and not overplayed, Jensen makes a fine debut.

"Robes" by Patricia Duffy Novak is also excellent. In Novak's hypothesized fantasy society, wizards are trained and then tested. After their tests, the wizards must pick one of the four paths

to magical power and wear the robe signifying their choice. This protects the wizard from madness and the society from abuse from dangerous wizards. Kaitlyn, a girl wizard-in-training, learns more than she bargained for about both power and herself. This is the one story I wished had continued, in order to find out more about Kaitlyn, her sidekick Alwyn and their further adventures.

Three off-beat heroines deserve mention. In Nancy L. Pine's "Old Age and Trenchery..." Della is a tired, frail old lady who wants nothing more than her meals on time. She ends up saving everyone from an invasion (of men) by using her brains. Not only is this a good short story, but it is to be commended, for few stories of any kind have believable old people in them. "Mage-Sight" by

Lynne Alisse Witten also features a unique heroine, but unfortunately, telling just what quality makes her special would ruin the story. You'll have to find this one out for yourself. Finally, in "Taking Shape" by Lisa Deason, our heroine is a timid shape-changer who is befriended by and ends up rescuing a swordswoman. It's another clever, original idea.

The majority of the stories are about good people finding a positive solution to their problems. That makes "Night, Who Creeps Through Keyholes" by Francesca Myman an exception. In this darker fantasy, the ruler of a just-vanquished city is captured by the new king. She faces down this beautiful and cold king and must match wits with him. This story, another first sale, will linger with me.

A few other stories are also darker, most notably the anthology's last one, "Justice is Mine" by Carolee J. Edwards. In a time such as today, when Rodney King and others are having a difficult time finding justice and yet the dangers of people taking the law into their own hands are all too apparent, it was refreshing to read a short story, set in a fantasy environment, that tackles this big, real-world concern. Follow the rules and sometimes the guilty escape; don't follow the rules and become part of the problem. The twist at the end was surprising and satisfying—and as imperfect as our real-world solutions. Also memorable was a complex story by Diana L. Paxson, "Falcon's Shadow," which contains, of all things, a were-falcon. "The Phoenix Medallion" by Diana Partridge is another complex and surprising story, with unusual heroes.

Not all of the 29 stories worked for me, but the greatest advantage of an anthology of this size, put together by the well-qualified Bradley, is that it will satisfy a diverse spectrum of readers. With the variety of stories—funny, complex, dark, and light—there's enough here to please.

Rachel A. Russell

**Beyond Cyberpunk**, Gareth Branwyn, *Editor The Computer Lab*, (5.5 Meg hard disk) \$35.00

Books made of paper are obsolete, say the gurus of the electronic movement. Once you get over the initial investment, you can do the same thing better, faster and cheaper on a computer screen, using features of the computer to do things that real books can't do. *Beyond Cyberpunk* (The Computer Lab, \$35.00) is a glimpse at what some people think the future of books might be.

Not merely any book, however, *Beyond Cyberpunk* is a Michelin's guide to the fringe culture of the literate techno-weird, the natural habitat of phreakers, discordsians and electronic anarchists. Essentially, it's an electronic *Whole Earth Catalog* of the fringe. You'll find entries on things like the Cult of the SubGenius, Mondo 2000, Virtual Reality, RE:Search publications, Survival Research Labs, and all manner of Cyberpunk SF. It

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As you read it, from time to time the system will interrupt you with short, cryptic aphorisms from the character "Kata Sutra," which I found quite amusing.

The Macintosh hypercard is a form of electronic filing system that allows easy cross-linking from one place to another in a long document (and in computer terms "document" doesn't necessarily mean just text—it could include sounds, pictures, and even games). Thus, a Hypercard document doesn't have to be read in a simple way from beginning to end. It's built for browsing, and hypertext allows you to effortlessly follow digressions and choose your own path to explore the database. *Beyond Cyberpunk* ex-

ploits this to some degree by allowing you to click on certain terms (signalled in bold-face type) to jump to the corresponding entry in another section of the glossary, and also gives you a list of related subjects at the end of each article. An arrow icon at the bottom of the screen allows you to return back from where you came; in fact, it allows you to retrace backward your entire route (or at least the last 40 entries you've scanned).

*Beyond Cyberpunk* claims to have 300 entries. On five floppy disks, it takes 5.5 Meg on your hard disk. That's a lot of disk space! As the wave of the future, I don't think it's going to take off with the public until the whole program can be packaged on one disk. Loading the five disks onto the machine was the most tedious part of the experience.

The user interface only takes a few minutes for the Macintosh-literate to learn. Although a few elements are a bit obscure (the switch that toggles to "page" mode is completely unlabeled and almost invisible), it has an adequate help file that is easy to access.

The opening sound effects ("Beyond Cyberpunk," says a silky feminine voice.

"Please stand by") are loud. You won't be able to read this one during working hours and hope your boss won't notice!

Despite the claim of "cool sounds and strange sights," most of the entries are text, with only brief sound clips and the occasional graphic image. I was at first disappointed in the black and white graphics, as Mac-ILs are capable of superb high-resolution graphics, but I figured that the authors deliberately chose to avoid sophisticated color images in order to make sure it would run on a wide variety of Macintosh platforms. (Later, it occurred to me that if they had incorporated sophisticated images, it would have taken a lot more than 5.5 Meg.)

If you've never been exposed to the strange fringe of postmodern society that treats science fiction as a given and cyberpunk as a way of life, *Beyond Cyberpunk* will be a delicious treat. If you've already read *Mondo 2000* and can tell ribfunk from stem-punk, you'll still find this amusing enough to browse through, although you may wish it went into a bit more depth.

Geoffrey A. Landis

## BOOKS TO WATCH FOR

**Kalimantan**, by Lucius Shepherd (TOR). Follow this Nebula and World Fantasy Award winning author to the heart of Borneo, where American expatriate Curtis MacKinnon discovers a drug that not only alters perception, but tampers with reality as well.

**The Twilight Gate**, by Rhonda Vilott Saltsitz (Walker). Saltsitz has written dozens of novels over the past decade, none of them garnering the attention they deserve. Hopefully, this Alan Clark illustrated young adult fantasy novel of the ultimate battle between Good and Evil will change that.

**Prophet**, by Mike Resnick (Ace). The Oracle trilogy at last comes to its long-awaited conclusion from the sometimes controversial author who manages never to let his prodigious output compete with the quality of his prose.

**Glory Road**, by Robert Heinlein (Baen). Sometimes we find our best future when we look to the past. Baen continues its project of publishing the unexpurgated Heinlein and shows us once more why we fell in love with SF in the first place.

**Pasts, Presents and Futures**, by Harry Turtledove (Ballantine del Rey). Fans of the author's fantasy series *The Videssos Cycle* and his Basil Argos stories will welcome Turtledove's first standalone story collection, bringing together his finest shorter length works.

**Ruler of the Sky: The Saga of Genghis Khan**, by Pamela Sargent

(Random House). From the creator of the *Venus of Drexus* trilogy, who also assembled the groundbreaking *Women of Wonder* anthologies, comes a biography of the Terran ruler whose power rivaled that of Darth Vader.

**Against a Dark Background**, by Iain M Banks (Bantam). Whoever controls the enigmatic Lost Gun controls all mankind, and governments and cults alike will kill to own it. A space opera with style, combining the gosh-wow inventiveness of the best past SF with the mature style of the '90s.

**By the Sword**, by Greg Costikyan (Tor). *Madmaze*, a roleplaying game on Prodigy, has drawn more users than anything else offered by that computer network. Now Costikyan has transformed the game he created into a novel, rife with barbarians, wizards, and princesses. If you've played the game, now you can read the book.

**Dracula: The Ultimate Illustrated Edition of the World-Famous Vampire Play**, by David S. Slot (St. Martin's). Everything you ever wanted to know about the most famous vampire of them all but were too scared of the dark to ask.

**Terminal Identity**, by Scott Bakula (Duke University Press). This volume is further proof that we live in a Science Fiction Age. Bakula examines the place of SF in today's postmodern world, and finds that SF not only plays a critical part, but that it's taken over.

## Recent and Recommended

•After far too long a wait, the second edition of *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia* (St. Martin's Press, hardcover, 1370 pages, \$75.00) has appeared, edited by John Clute and Peter Nicholls. Those lucky enough to own a copy of the first edition from 1979 have surely smudged and dog-eared the volume from over a dozen years of poring over what was the most important SF reference book ever produced. This new volume, with a 56 percent increased word count to 1,200,000 words, is a must for the bookshelf of any SF devotee.

Not only is the book filled with biographical entries on major and minor SF writers, artists, editors and publishers, with dates of birth, first sales and bibliographies, but the book also catalogs magazines, movies, awards, workshops, conventions and all other facets of SF life. Of particular interest are the overview essays on topics such as generation starships, clichés, and feminism, which act as history modules on important aspects and themes of SF.

What is impressive about *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia* is that not only have the editors gotten their facts right, they have at the same time managed to create an encyclopedia with attitude. They treat you not only to the minutiae of facts on each subject, but also take a critical stand, whether to praise one writer ("Because of his intellectual sociopathy, the chillingly distanced mannerism of his narrative art, the austerity of the pleasures he affords, and the fine cruelty of his wit, [he] has been perhaps the most respected, least trusted, most envied and least read of all modern first-rank SF writers."), or to despair over another ("There is a growing sense that [he] might never write



the major novel he once seemed capable of—not because he has lost the knack, but because he refuses to.”) You may not agree with each of the aesthetic positions taken, but if nothing else, they will make you think and care as much about the meaning of SF as the editors do.

The 4360 entries (and 2100 cross-reference entries) are set in an easy to read typeface for long hours of comfortable reading. Picking up this hefty book, which outweighs both the Bible and the collected works of Shakespeare, will fill you with awe, for you'll be cradling the whole of the history of SF in your hands.

•Now that the mainstream and academia have teamed up to kidnap Philip K. Dick from those who loved him first and best, a new essay collection comes along to remind the world that this dreamer of electric sheep belonged to science fiction. *On Philip K. Dick* (Terre Haute and Greencastle, 1992, 290 pages) contains essays by Ian Watson, Brian Aldiss, Stanislaw Lem, Darko Suvin, Kim Stanley Robinson and others, in an attempt to redefine the man whom Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. calls in his introduction, “the single writer most responsible for the acceptance of SF as a dominant genre of literature in the second half of the 20th century.”

While it may be argued that there are other candidates well qualified to fill that position, the essayists do an excellent job of building



Artist P. Craig Russell's lyrical style is perfect for retelling Oscar Wilde's "The Selfish Giant."

their case, as in Len's controversial "A Visionary Among the Charlatans" and Patricia Warwick's "The Encounter of Taoism and Fascism in The Man in the High Castle." The 40 pieces collected here first appeared in the critical journal *Science Fiction Studies*, and well deserve this wider publication.

•Oscar Wilde, though better known for his classic *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, and such witticisms as *The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it*, also wrote many short tales of fantasy. P. Craig Russell, the comic book artist who honed his skills in the '70s on such Marvel science fiction titles as *War of the Worlds* but later moved on to adapting operas such as *The Ring Cycle*, has tackled

the adaptation of two of Wilde's tales in Volume One of *The Fairy Tales of Oscar Wilde*.

First up is *The Selfish Giant*, about a monstrous ill-tempered behemoth who frightens the children away from his valley, only to discover that a frigid winter falls to take their place. *The Star-Child* concerns a fair young boy whose good looks make him vain and cruel. When he confronts his beggared mother, he taunts her with bricks, only to find himself changed into something hideous. In each illustrated story, Russell has managed to capture the spirit of Wilde's wit. Though born a hundred years apart, Russell's perfect fusing of words and art shows their talents have much in common.

S.E.

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## MOVIES

By Brian McCallister

# Dinosaurs walk the Earth once more in Stephen Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*.



State-of-the-art special effects have created the movies' finest dinosaurs. Not wanting to give away any surprises, this is one of the few dinosaur images Spielberg released prior to the film's opening in June.

**I**T WAS BOUND TO HAPPEN, GIVEN THE CONTINUING advances in genetic engineering. A company based in Palo Alto, California, International Genetic Technologies, Inc.—or InGen, as it is better known—buys a remote island off the west coast of Costa Rica for the purposes of building on it the world's most advanced amusement park, combining cutting-edge electronic and biological technologies.

Given the public's increased sophistication, the park's developer reasons that his resort will need to boast attractions so spectacular that the roller coasters and haunted mansions and animatronic pirates of his traditional-minded competitors are rendered instant anachronisms.

His theme park, he decides, will boast living attractions. And not merely exotic plants and imported animal life, but 15 species of genetically engineered dinosaurs—cloned from DNA extracted from amber, the fossilized resin of prehistoric tree sap. But a series of mysterious mishaps threaten to shut the park's doors even before they open, causing one project consultant to dub the park "an accident waiting to happen."

The above scenario might have been ripped from the pages of *Scientific American*; but, in fact, it is the disturbingly plausible premise behind author Michael Crichton's best-selling novel, *Jurassic Park*, now a \$58.6 million summer offering from director Steven Spielberg and Universal Pictures.

So suited was Crichton's blend of fantasy, science and adventure to Spielberg's people-pleasing directorial style that Spielberg's production company, Amblin, bought the property while it was still in the galley stages.

The film's producer, Kathleen Kennedy, says the book had several qualities that made it perfect for the director of *E.T.* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the most obvious being that it "presented itself as an action-adventure picture with huge special FX. When people see 'a Steven Spielberg film' above the title, they have an idea in their heads of what they want that movie to be. This movie has every single bit of that."

The book's themes also spoke to issues close to Spielberg, adds Kennedy. "The Everyman theme is a running theme in most of Steven's films. If you look at *Close Encounters*, *E.T.*, *Pottergeist*—those are pictures that clearly take the Everyman, so to speak, and put him in situations where he experiences extraordinary things and has to deal with them. And usually the outcome is upbeat rather than tragic.

"In *Jurassic Park*, John Hammond [played by actor/director Sir Richard Attenborough] is one of those Everymen. He's the caretaker of the park, so to speak; it's his dream that he's brought into being. He very much represents all those who have reached the pinnacles of their careers and still have dreams left that they want to see realized. His grandchildren are very much a part of this story, too. Most every child who goes to see this movie can identify with the kids in this picture and with the whole notion of going to an outdoor zoo/combination theme park where they get to see live dinosaurs instead of lions, tigers and bears."

Kennedy maintains that there aren't any substantive differences between the book and Spielberg's filmization. "You'll see that the tale told in the book is very much the tale Steven is telling. We haven't changed the book dramatically; if anything, we had to cut back on the material."

That said, the question of tone arises. Crichton's book is dark and edgy; Spielberg, on the other hand, is best known for whimsical and light-hearted entertainments. The suggestion that Spielberg may have taken the "teeth" out of Crichton's cautionary tale makes Kennedy bristle.

"Yes, the book, in many respects, has an edge to it, a terror to it, but to make that kind of movie would have necessitated making an R-rated movie that children could not see. Steven is not doing that. Steven is making a movie that is very accessible to all ages. You don't make a huge, \$50-million-dollar action-adventure movie that only a handful of people can see. It doesn't make any sense."

As *Jurassic Park* was over two years in preparation—Spielberg started work on the film and then turned his attentions to directing *Hook*—Kennedy and her cohorts had the luxury of being able to fine-tune the production even before the cameras rolled. "We knew we had a lot

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of questions that had to be answered, the first being how we could make this movie for a reasonable amount of money," Kennedy explains. "It's easy to sit down with this book and make a \$100-million movie. Steven made it very, very clear that he wasn't going to make this movie if it was a penny over \$80 million.

"So our challenge, for a long, long period of time, was to continually budget, then go back to the drawing board—literally. The FX design team met once a week for two years. We had to decide which sequences we could and couldn't do, how many dinosaurs we could and couldn't build, and what it was those dinosaurs would have to do. Then we had to decide how each of those elements would be broken down, whether a particular dinosaur was going to be built or some aspect of it generated in the computer.

"We were not only able to test every single dinosaur element but we were able to put together animatics [a 'moving' storyboard] for all the action sequences so that we could very clearly see exactly what the scene



Laura Devi and Sam Neil inspect an ailing Triceratops created by Stan Winston's FX crew.

would look like and what we needed to build. It enabled us to have a tremendous amount of control during production. We bas-

sically massaged the elements so that we could look at it and say, yes, we're absolutely convinced we can do this, and we can do it

## FX WIZARDS GIVE DINOSAURS LIFE

**F**rom the animated chess game in *Star Wars* to the "liquid-metal" T-1000 android in *Terminator 2*, Phil Tippett, Stan Winston and Dennis Muren have consistently provided some of the screen's most impressive and innovative special effects to date. Now they've combined their expertise to create the cloned dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park*. Tippett, Winston and Muren, working with a combined staff of nearly 200 people, have used a variety of time-honored techniques and state-of-the-art technology to bring the dinosaurs of *Jurassic Park* to life.

The first step in creating the dinosaurs was to capture the look of the dinosaurs in the form of clay models. To this end, the effects supervisors worked closely with Spielberg in tracking the latest paleontological research from experts such as Jack Horner. "We're playing up the hot-blooded dinosaur angle," said Phil Tippett. Spielberg and company also examined modern dinosaur illustrations by artists such as Mark Hallett and John Gurche.

From the prototypes, one-fifth scale articulated models of the various dinosaurs were built for an intermediate step. Phil Tippett and his staff worked with Spielberg to choreograph the key dinosaur sequences using stop-motion animation. These "animatics," shot against rudimentary sets constructed of cardboard and foamcore, served as a "dinosaur bible," cataloging movement, behavior, and even personalities for both the full-scale animatronic and computer animation sequences to follow. In addition, Tippett noted, "I'm working in

conjunction with Industrial Light and Magic (ILM), and my own shop is contributing animations that we developed ourselves using different kinds of top-secret input devices to help generate the computer graphics."

Tippett, whose dinosaur choreography was critical in creating seamless transitions between the full-scale animatronic and computer animation shots, went on to describe the interrelationship as representing "a significant crossover. We have been very influenced by the ILM computer animators and I think we've been an influence on them with my style of animating.

We're developing this parallel evolution with what ILM's evolving with their computer graphics department. We're off on another tangent in developing these different kinds of input devices, making use of stop-motion, go-motion, and we're trying to apply that knowledge to the graphics."

Technical challenges abound, he admitted. "Every single minute, there's something else. All the work that ILM is doing is cutting edge kind of work, so they're right

in the forefront, with new ideas and new techniques to make the characters integrate better into the shots."

Stan Winston utilized an array of mechanical and electronic technologies to create his full-scale, "live-action" animatronic dinosaurs, including a 40-foot-long *Tyrannosaurus rex*. "In bringing these dinosaurs to life onscreen, we have incorporated not only the state of the art of every technology available for this type of thing, but we have crossed over beyond what anyone has seen before...in the area of robotics and animatronics. We used every aspect of animatronic automation to create completely organic movement with these animals—ranging from hydraulics to direct cable-actuated controls to servo motors to computer console activation."

The full-scale dinosaurs, Winston asserts, "have a life, created mechanically, beyond any artificially created life you've ever seen. They were created so that they could, in fact, respond through their operators, to the direction from Steven Spielberg. So that they could respond as actors. Through the use of all the up-to-date technology, we were able to create this movement with



Dino artist Dana Geraths excises Spielberg's *Deinonychus*-like 'raptor' on the attack.

for this price, and this is what it's going to look like. The script was shaped accordingly."

Technological advances enabled *Jurassic Park's* FX team to improve upon many of the classic film techniques previously used to realize widescreen prehistoric beasts. "When we started this project, we were going to create many of the dinosaurs using stop-motion and go-motion," offers Kennedy. "In fact, those processes essentially became obsolete in the course of prepping the movie. What we've done is a big step from the old Ray Harryhausen or *Godzilla* movies. Our film has more grounded in the reality of scientific research."

In keeping with the film's attention to scientific reality, Kennedy and Spielberg are adamant that *Jurassic Park* not be referred to as science fiction. "It's not science fiction, it's based on fact," Kennedy emphasizes. "There have been a number of articles written and a lot of publicity having to do with scientists believing that they can extract DNA chains from insects or small animals

trapped within amber. Granted, they have not successfully re-created a complete genetic chain of a dinosaur, but they believe they absolutely have the capability to do that. That's why we tend to refer to the film as science eventually; we feel that within our lifetime this is something they will achieve."

"The book is a cautionary tale. It ultimately comes down to the fact that technology is moving at such a rapid rate, that with a lot of these things coming on the horizon, things that could conceivably happen within our lifetime, we are faced with the question, 'what we can do, should we do?' That's the real moral dilemma: if you can re-create a dinosaur, should you re-create that dinosaur?"

Don Lessem, founder of the Long Island,

The FX design team met once a week for two years....to decide which sequences we could and couldn't do.

N.Y.-based Dinosaur Society, the world's only non-profit organization for dinosaur science and education, is a writer whose books (*Dinosaurs Rediscovered*, *The Complete T. Rex*) and TV documentaries about dinosaurs came to the attention of Spielberg early in the pre-production stages of *Jurassic Park*. He and another Dinosaur Society member, Dr. Jack Horner, worked as consultants on the film, with Horner acting as chief scientific advisor.

Lessem found Crichton's book to be "very clever within the bounds of speculation, which is what you have to get into when you bring a dinosaur back to life. In that sense, his speculations are all quite sound. The reality of it is, we're far from being able to

Continued on page 28



FX wizard Phil Tippett animates a puppet for one of the many projects he has worked on over the years.

strength, with speed and fluidity that has never been seen before. A great deal of our life movement also comes from Phil Tippett's understanding and feeling of dramatic dinosaur movement. Phil's like a living lizard!"

Winston stressed the film's commitment to scientific accuracy. "We have, I feel, for this movie, been able to create the most real and dynamic dinosaurs ever, historically. There's a reality to that beyond what anyone has seen in a museum. We have the ability financially, by virtue of the big movie machine, to create what's never been created before in a very historical and educational manner."

"We did take a little bit of artistic license with the *Velociraptors* from a design standpoint. *Velociraptor* is in the same family as *Deinonychus*. *Deinonychus*' head, as opposed to a *Velociraptor*, is a bit blunter, a little bit stronger. We pushed to the *Deinonychus* side of the design for our 'raptor-esque' animals."

Dennis Muren supervised the computerized graphic images of the dinosaurs at Industrial Light and Magic, using Pixar's Renderman and other sophisticated graphics packages. "What I'd like to stress," he said, "is that the equipment a year ago was sort of up to speed, and that's really not the difference that's going on these days. It's really the talent of the people

doing it—not in how fast your gigabytes are or how much random-access memory you have in your machine."

"It's been just an amazing show because we're pushing the technology to see how 'real is real,' and we literally look back at work we did a month ago and it's obsolete already. It's really just because we've learned the tools better. It's ten times harder than what we did on *T2*, even, which was ten times harder than *The Abyss*. We're just getting better and better at it."

Muren generated skin texture maps, so that the computer-generated dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park* would closely match Winston's full-sized creatures. "They naturally have to look photo-real," Muren stated. "You can't tell the difference and think 'oh, that's a computer character.' That's been a major challenge because I hadn't ever seen anything done before where you see the skin moving successfully over the muscle and bone structure of an animal. That was the stuff we're trying to get.

"Equally as difficult is to get the animal to perform. That's where computer graphics comes in over everything else, in that you can sort of work over and over again on a performance, because you always pick it up where you left it. You save your file and start over again the next day and tweak this part and that part until you get it right. You're never starting over from the beginning like you are with any other technique."

"So we've got shots in the show that are 25 seconds long, which I would call a sustained performance of an animal—not just standing there but performing like an actor. That's incredibly difficult. That's where Phil Tippett—he was directing most of that stuff—was really very valuable to the show, because he's got a good background in animal behavior and dinosaurs."

Muren admitted that he wasn't sure what level of close-up realism his computer graphics team could accomplish initially. "In the beginning phases of it, we just tried doing a shot of a herd running by off in the distance. That worked successfully. Then we got a little bolder and did a full shot of the *Tyrannosaurus* and did a walk-by of the camera so you saw it from the hips up. That worked, and we got even closer—from the neck up—a head shot. That's what's in the show. We have shots that close."

The completed sequences will consist of a series of cuts between the full-scale animatronic and computer-animated shots, each technology working to mimic the other, aided by Phil Tippett's choreography. As Winston summed it up, "We've put everything together artistically and technically, and it's created a new world, dramatically and visually, for *Jurassic Park*."

Dan Perez

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## By Dore Spotts

I put on my space age shades, plugged in the Thunderstorm soundtrack, and programmed the SuperMind™ computer for a "heavy-duty" Theta session. As I punched the start button I was reminded of NASA's virtual reality machines. These billion dollar video games that transport your consciousness into an artificial computer world you manipulate with voice commands and gestures.

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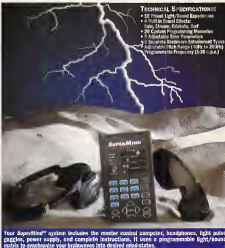
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And if you order your SuperMind™ now (during our special introductory period), you'll receive a third special bonus - FREE. Four very unique *MindWare™* soundtracks, called *Moodscapes™*, enhance your SuperMind™ experience. You simply connect a stereo player to the SuperMind™ unit using the patch cord provided. While the frequency matrix of your SuperMind™ alters your mind-state, the *Moodscapes* soundtrack transports your consciousness into a beautiful and unique aural landscape. Because your brain is so "tuned in" by the light/sound frequencies, your mind creates an intense array of mental images. The combination is truly mind-expanding. And remember, all four *Moodscapes* (\$100 value) are yours FREE, even if you decide to return your SuperMind™ system for a full refund. And that's only the beginning.

### \$500 Free MindWare™ Pak

Because as part of this special promotion I'm including \$500 worth of additional *MindWare* bundled with your SuperMind™ computer. For a limited time the SuperMind™ comes with 4 accelerated language courses, a 22-title Behavioral Mindscripting library, and a "Fantastic Mind Journeys" library to launch your consciousness into new realities.

## \$100 Worth of Mind-Altering "Moodscapes" Free!

"A powerful new form of audio expansion" is how one review describes the experience. Another calls it "Fantastic! LSD™ alternatives are 'subliminal' experiences for MindWare as we call it that enhance your SuperMind™ sessions. They transport your consciousness on a powerful meditative journey. One user learned the experience to the sensory input shown in the movie 'Total Recall' because it created such powerful mental imagery. Your *Moodscapes* library includes 4 separate aural landscapes. Each soundtrack uses a special sensory mix of environmental sound effects, and musical features designed to stimulate vivid sensory responses in the brain. Each is a unique experience that seems to change every time you listen to it.



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A storm is coming. You hear the crackling thunder. Lightning flashes, and rain begins to fall. You feel safe and protected, but strangely by the powerful forces of nature.



**Spring Day (\$20 Value)**  
You're in a warm bed, on the south of flowers and new grass fills the air. A sparkling stream and the sounds of birds awaken the beauty of spring.



**Seashore (\$20 Value)**  
Gentle waves roll on the sea. You feel calm and safe. A cool wind blows through your hair. A ship passes by far out to sea. A small cat meows towards you with warmth and love.



**Starry Night (\$20 Value)**  
The night sky is filled with stars falling on an oval disk you are watching as it slowly spins below your feet. The stars create an amazing infinite universe you will witness and enjoy.

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## Super Motivation Library

Turn stress into success, and a loser mindset into a winning one at a touch of a button with the 22-title Behavioral Mindscripting Library. By first synchronizing your brainwaves into the optimum mind-state for psychological programming, the SuperMind™ uses these mindscripts to rewrite deeply embedded subconscious belief patterns. Eliminate self-sabotaging behavior and implant new success patterns automatically. Normally each title is \$10, but for a limited time I'm bundling this entire \$220 library FREE with your SuperMind™ computer.

And here's something else...

## 3 Fantastic Mind Journeys

Trigger vivid sensory responses in your brain and transport your consciousness on a journey to other times and places with three mind-blowing experiences. Astringent Dreamlink takes you to a mythical time when the world was new and magic ruled. *Clavian Mind Link* puts your consciousness inside a whale and dolphin to experience their



The SuperMind™ bonus bundle package also includes the Behavioral Mindscripting Library, 3 Fantastic Mind Journeys, and the 4 Instant Language courses with workbook, as well as your free-to-keep Moodscapes™ Library, and Auto-Hypnosis and 5-mind Learning Aids Reports

incredible ocean world. And finally the ultimate mind-trip, *Near Death Experience* simulates the 5 astral stages of a journey out of your body, then back again, renewed and enlightened. Three superbly crafted SuperMind™ experiences are \$25 each, adding another \$75 bonus value to your package.

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This powerful brain boosting computer with all its incredible bonuses -

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## 30-Day Free Trial

And you can try it entirely at my risk over the next 30 days. Take your brain on a mind machine journey into incredible mind-altering experiences, learn foreign languages at the push of a button, and reprogram a loser mindset into a winning one. If for any reason you're not blown away by the experience, send your computer back to me for a full

refund. But no matter what you decide to do, keep the \$100 worth of Moodscapes as my free gift just for giving it a shot.

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A \$200 value, the Instant Language Library is yours FREE with your SuperMind™ Bonus Bundle Package.

## ESSAY

By Paul Di Filippo

# Who are the 50 most powerful people in Science Fiction?



In the eyes of the *lame*, corporations are considered to be individuals, and so Paramount Studios, keeper of the *Star Trek* flame, ranks as one of the most powerful people in SF.

**C**ALL IT MANA, CELEBRITY, PULL, WEIGHT, MORE or muscle. Call it raw, naked, nail-your-hide-to-the-wall power.

Those who have this magic puissance are our topic here today. Specifically, the men and women active in the SF field who cause things to happen. The ones who influence, determine and sometimes squelch what the average reader sees and hears.

This shaping, the exercise of power, can take many forms. In all cases, though, the prime criterion for determining who has true power is this: Can the person remake the world to some degree in his or her image? The reification of dreams or conceits, for good or ill, is the absolute measure of power.

Here then—categorized, but otherwise in no particular ranking—are our choices for the top 50 power-holders of the SF world.

And, of course, modesty forbids the author from nominating either himself or the editor of this magazine, much as they deserve it!

### WRITERS

**HARLAN ELLISON.** Ellison is the Mick Jagger of SF. Like his slightly younger rock and roll counterpart, he continues to invigorate a pop museum he helped to invent. Festooned with honors, rich in history, he heeds unwaveringly to the highest standards of courage and vision.

**J. G. BALLARD.** Brought to a wider audience by the film version of his *Empire of the Sun*,



J.G. Ballard

Mr. Ballard remains a writer's writer, one who sends out fresh reverberations with each new work.

**WILLIAM BURROUGHS.** Grandfather of the cyberpunks, Mr. Burroughs is one of those large cultural icons to whom a host of creative artists bow down.

**RUDY RUCKER.** His gonzo math books are cult—sometimes even required—reading on campuses across the country. His Autodesk software is touted in journals such as *Mondo 2000*. And his fiction has single-handedly laid down a new set of "Freestyle" or "Transreal" blueprints for others to follow.

**RAY BRADBURY.** Along with the next nominee, Mr. Bradbury is the last Old Guard writer whose name is practically synonymous with SF in the mind of the general public.

**ARTHUR C. CLARKE.** The Sage of Sri Lanka, having survived his peers Heinlein and Asimov, embodies pre-bestseller SF, as well as the more recent phenomenon of the blockbuster (his sequels to 2001).

**LARRY NIVEN AND JERRY POURNELLE.** As a team, Messrs. Pournelle and Niven command a place not arguably available to either separately. They were among the first to show that genre SF could make the various topseller lists.

**ROBERT SILVERBERG.** As editor, anthologist, truther, and writer, Mr. Silverberg has continued to flourish across the decades.

**URSULA K. LEGUIN.** The mainstream literary establishment deigns to honor few genre writers, and the fact that they have done so with Ms. LeGuin is no slight to her, but rather a belated acknowledgment that writing of real value can emerge from the SF field while remaining true to its roots.

**WILLIAM GIBSON.** Without the cool sexy prose and hard-nosed re-imaginings of SF tropes employed by Mr. Gibson, the world today would be radically different.

**BRUCE STEERLING.** And without the tireless energy of Chairman Bruce, cyberpunk would never have achieved escape velocity. With the recent publication of *Globelind* and *The Hacker Crackdown*, he continues to advance on two fronts simultaneously.

**THOMAS PYNCHON.** The only SF writer ever to receive a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant" or National Book Award, Mr. Pynchon functions as model for dozens of writers, from Richard Grant to Marc Laidlaw, from David Foster Wallace to Stuart Moulthrop, whose

hypertext novel *Victory Garden* lays a *Gravity's Rainbow* template over the Gulf War.

### PUBLISHERS

**LOU ARONICA.** Massive as a 10-elephant juggernaut, Mr. Aronica's Bantam/Doubleday/Dell (the Beast of 666 Fifth Avenue) flattens the competition with more imprints than some have titles.



Ursula K. LeGuin



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MARK ZEISING. Mr. Zeising plays host to both cutting-edge authors like John Shirley and popular favorites like Lucius Shepard, displaying them always to their best advantage in books which bore bibliophiles and fans.

CHARLES BROWN. Fan, editor, and bibliographer as well as publisher, Mr. Brown and his *Locus* belong predominately in the latter category. Providing a continuous gauge of what's commercial and hot, *Locus* serves as a standard against which both conformity and rebellion can measure themselves.

STEPHEN BROWN. Mr. Brown, at the helm of *Science Fiction Eye*, continues to single-handedly hold aloft the banner of SF metacriticism. The field lacks any other outlet with the gumption, vision and contributor-corps sufficient to the task of fining the outer edges and inner spaces of SF.

TOM DOHERTY. In just a decade or so, Mr. Doherty has brought Tor Books to the point where his line represents the hardcore of the genre as Ace once did in the '60s.

BYRON PREISS. Prominent among the so-called "packagers," Mr. Preiss has played an important part in the inventive merchandising of SF.

**EDITORS**

KRISTINE RUSCH. Having given up her toehold in the distressed *Pulphouse* empire, Ms. Rusch remains at the tiller of *F&SF*. The jury appears to be still out on her ability to shine the light on new authors and to elicit statements from old ones, but her diligence and commitment and resources are not to be questioned.

DAVID PRINGLE. *Interzone* still occupies the top of the heap of British magazines and remains the best outlet for envelope-pushing stories. With the advent of *Million*, an ambitious journal of pop-culture coverage, Mr. Pringle is now the sole person in the field to captain both a fiction and a critical 'zine.

ELLEN DATLOW. The Queen Bee of the somnolent Cyberpunk Hive has perhaps a lower profile these days than of yore, yet continues to shake and move in significant ways. With various original anthologies and best-of collections, along with her *Owini* post, she commands the first preview of most short fiction.

ALICE TURNER. With a genuine fondness for the SF community, Ms. Turner, *Playboy's* fiction mistress, offers the imprimatur of a wider culture to all those authors whose stories she selects.

DAVID HARTWELL. The most erudite book editor of them all. We trust him to find

the SF world's Fitzgerald and Wolfe.

ELLEN ASHER. The head of the SF Book Club, Ms. Asher determines what a large percentage of the readership sees highlighted. By keeping a sturdy backlist in front of the membership, she also gives the field a continuity sorely lacking elsewhere.

GARDNER DOZOIS. No other editor except Robert Silverberg has experienced life from both sides of the fence as extensively as Mr. Dozois. With a writing career that would be the envy of many, he has moved on to forging *Asimov's* into a magazine which, until now, has towered over the field the way *Galfrey* did at its height.

DAVID GARNETT. With a career stretching back over 25 years, Mr. Garnett possesses an overarching view of SF that allows him to cultivate the newest of the new and the best of the traditional. His now-defunct best-of-the-year collections offered a fascinating counterpoint to the American ones.

**CRITICS**

DAMON KNIGHT. Mr. Knight is the implicit conscience of SF. Having invented the critical apparatus of the genre, he continues to offer it a forum in his journal *Monad* and in his Clarion Workshop teachings.

JOHN CLUTE. Possessing the most lapidary style of all current SF critics, Mr. Clute seems to have read every book in the field, as well as having swallowed most of world literature whole.

JAMES GUNN. SF's premier link with academe. Mastermind behind *The New Encyclopedia of SF*, Mr. Gunn practices a commonsense brand of criticism rooted in nearly four decades of writing and teaching SF.

MARK KELLY. Mr. Kelly performs with aplomb the superhuman task of staying abreast of all short fiction published in the field. His monthly picks in *Locus* frequently prefigure the hottest stories of each year.

GERALD JONAS. Mr. Jonas, in his capacity as the SF columnist for *The New York Times Book Review*, represents SF to a worldwide readership often ignorant of the genre. He manages to write in a way that both insiders and outsiders can appreciate.

MICHAEL DIRDA. *The Washington Post*, in both its *Sunday Book World* and in its daily reviews, covers SF so fairly and diligently that one almost begins to feel there's some justice in the world. As the man who not only parcels out reviewing assignments but also writes keen-eyed analyses of everything from mainstream novels to children's books to non-fiction, Mr. Dirda holds a unique position.

**ARTISTS**

FRANK KELLY FREAS. Longevity is not the only reason for the continued popularity of Mr. Freas's work. A lustrous palette, sexy babes and sexier rockets, and an ability to concretize the furthest-out SF images in a homey way also go a long way toward explaining the bonds he has created.

FRANK FRAZETTA. From album sleeves to movie posters, from the covers of old paperbacks to comic book reissues, Mr.



Byron Preiss



Kristine Rusch

Frazetta's work looms large. Weaver of a million heavy-metal daydreams of mighty-thewed barbarians and pease-bottomed moon maidens, Mr. Frazetta is more responsible for the popularity of visual and literary fantasy than anyone else except perhaps Tolkien.

**MICHAEL WHELAN.** Progenitor of the current smooth look in SF art and a record-holding award winner, Mr. Whelan exemplifies the power of clean lines, powerful compositions and scrupulous attention to glorious realism.

**RICHARD POWERS.** As a recent retrospective of his work at Readercon showed, Mr. Powers remains a vital, albeit subliminal force in the field.

**KEVIN EASTMAN and PETER LAIRD.** Only clitsists would deny that the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles are SF. Canopy, lowest-common-denominator SF, it's true, but so what? Messrs. Eastman and Laird have shown that the old Siegel-and-Schuster-create-Superman archetype is still functioning, thus giving hope to thousands of bedroom-clostered scribbling and sketching teens.

#### AGENTS

Perhaps the only way to accurately characterize the power of our selected agents is to provide a partial list of their accounts.

**RICHARD CURTIS.** Ray Aldridge, Greg Bear, Edward Bryant, Jeffrey Carver, Charles de Lint, Dave Duncan, George Alec Effinger, Kris Busch, John Stadek.



Ellen Datlow



Steven Spielberg

**RALPH VICINANZA.** Greg Benford, David Brin, Gordon Dickson, Joe Haldeman, James Kelly, John Kessel, George Martin, Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle, Kim Robinson, Robert Silverberg, Jack Vance, Connie Willis  
**MERRILEE HEIFETZ.** Octavia Butler, Pat Cadigan, James Morrow, Bruce Sterling, Joan Vinge.

**MARTHA MILLARD.** William Gibson, Elizabeth Hand, Paul Park, Allen Steele.

**VIRGINIA KIDD.** Alan Foster, R.A. Lafferty, Ursula LeGuin, Anne McCaffrey, Michael Swanwick, Gene Wolfe.

**ELEANOR WOOD.** Lois Bujold, Jack Chalker, Michael Flynn, James Hogan.

**RUSSELL GALEN.** Marion Bradley, Michael Kube-McDowell, Katherine Kurtz, Mercedes Lackey, Andre Norton, Harry Turtledove, Timothy Zahn.

#### FILMMAKERS

STEVEN SPIELBERG and GEORGE

LUCAS. Messrs. Lucas and Spielberg represent both the best and worst effects of power in the hands of men who are essentially 13-year-olds masquerading as adults.

**ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER.** He can make any movie he wants, and he seems to want to make quite a few SF films.

**ROBERT ZEMECKIS.** The *Back to the Future* trilogy and *Roger Rabbit* are reason enough to include this director/producer here.

**PARAMOUNT STUDIOS.** One of the lessons cyberpunk sought to teach was that corporations are individuals. And Paramount is one individual who cannot be ignored in the SF world. Like some Thomas Nast drawing of Boss Tweed, they sit atop the bag of loot labelled *Star Trek* (estimated earnings to date: two billion dollars). Their parent company also owns Pocket Books, the novelizing arm of the Federation.

**TIM BURTON.** With *Beetlejuice*, two *Batman* films, and *Edward Scissorhands*, not to mention  *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, Mr. Burton's oeuvre remains a shining goal for those who embrace quirky and romantic individualism in their SF films.

**TERRY GILLIAM.** Mr. Gilliam's entire output, however varying in quality, is speculative or fantastic in nature. With highpoints such as *Brazil*, *Baron Munchausen*, and *The Fisher King*, his career offers hope for those who favor the offbeat over the commercial. □

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## MOVIES

Continued from page 21

bring dinosaurs back to life. And if we could, I'm not sure we would want to.

"It would be enormously expensive. Also, it's a bit—more than a bit—of a quandary. Evolution brought us to this point; evolution was responsible for killing off dinosaurs. It takes a lot of nerve to think that humans can alter the course of life. Time and time again we've found that we can't control nature; that's the real core, I think, of Crichton's book. Using dinosaurs is a clever way for him to make this much broader point about the dangers of technology and our own self-importance."

Lessem concedes that "it's not a silly conceit to think we could clone dinosaur DNA, but whether it's realistic that it will happen in our lifetime is something else. Look specifically at what we've succeeded in cloning; no living animal much bigger than a frog. We're nowhere near mapping the human genome [the information required to create the organism], which is of considerably more importance to us than dinosaurs."

"Though there are some very promising leads, to be able to take that little bit of DNA and stretch it out to the entire genome and then have the technology to transfer that and to bring it all back to life is asking a lot."

Lessem likens his consultant role on *Jurassic Park* to "a translator of dinosaur information. I was a resource, instead of them going to an encyclopedia." He was a visitor to the *Jurassic Park* set on four occasions, most of them involving a scene filmed in the desert outside Los Angeles, where a "raptor" (or velociraptor, the film's dinosaur villain) is uncovered at a dig site.

"They went to extraordinary pains to make it as realistic as possible," he says. "They got an exact replica of two dinosaur fossils for the scene. They outfitted the workers on the dig with the kinds of clothes people actually wear on digs. They also used a sound-sensing machine that's used on some digs to try and locate bones. It was impressive that they went to so much trouble."

Fellow consultant, paleontologist Jack Horner, is said to be the model for Crichton's hero Alan Grant. "They have detail inside the *T. rex*'s mouth that no one has ever seen. It's a guess—a best guess. And a lot of adults will be surprised that dinosaurs don't drag their tails," says Horner. "But the kids will know it's right."

Horner was reported to be awestruck when he first set eyes on the product of Stan Winston's FX crew—a 9,000 lb., 40 foot long *Tyrannosaurus rex* model. "It was the closest I've ever been to a live dinosaur." He was

nearly when the giant model was brought to life by the FX crew. "It came up real fast, its eyes dilated, its skin was twitching. When you see it, it doesn't take much imagination to get beyond the fantasy. I jumped about 10 feet backward!"

Lessem's also has high praise for the "meticulous" manner in which the film's dinosaurs were fabricated, especially those

he viewed at Stan Winston's FX shop. "All of them were of a much higher quality than what I'm used to seeing in museum shows. Not only in their movements, but in the detail of their reconstruction—the eyeballs, the painting that was done on the skin, the texture of the plastic from which they were made. We have a good idea about the appearance of some dinosaurs, but not a good idea about all of the ones featured in the film. So, some of the dinosaurs in the movie are quite close to what we know of the animals, others are rather liberal functionalizations."

"Every dinosaur in the movie is based on an actual dinosaur, so the names are all real. What's not real is some of their dimensions and, possibly, some of their behaviors. In real life, the velociraptor fossils uncovered were not much bigger than a dog. In the movie, it's human-sized. There was a need, dramatically, to have it be an animal that was our size."

"The interesting thing is, after they began filming the movie, in two different places scientists found members of the raptor family that were actually even bigger than human size. In this case, Spielberg wasn't wrong, just a little ahead of science."

Lessem says he was "particularly impressed" with Spielberg's personal interest in dinosaur science. "We spent a lot of time talking about evolution and the specific dinosaurs in the film. He would routinely ask me if we had the dimensions of the dinosaurs right, or if such-and-such a detail looked right. And he did it not just for the sake of accuracy, but because he thought of them as fascinating animals and wanted to make them as close to the real thing as possible. He clearly has the same kind of interest in the subject that I do."

Adds Lessem, "You never have to worry about kids being interested in dinosaurs, up to the age of eight or nine. But you tend to lose them from then on till adulthood. They seem to get more involved in the real world. I think this movie will bring a lot of older kids back to dinosaurs and make them realize that dinosaurs aren't just for little kids, that the life of a scientist can be exciting."

Lessem has his own theory as to why the

public's fascination with dinosaurs continues to thrive. "Dinosaurs ruled the Earth for more than 160 million years. They came in a multiplicity of bizarre forms, they were capable of all kinds of varied and interesting behaviors. The research on them is not a hi-tech science; it's something we can all un-



At the story's climax, Sam Neill, Laura Dern, Ariana Richards, and Joseph Mazzello discover that raptors have entered the control center.

derstand. You can be scared by sharks, because they're out there. Or you can be scared by dragons, which were never there. But there's something in-between, this thing that was bigger and weirder than either of them, and it was real."

As a parting gift to the cast of *Jurassic Park*, Spielberg arranged through the Dinosaur Society to have a dinosaur—tagged "*Jurassosaurus vedegonpeferickmoran*", an amalgamation of the actor's last names—christened in their respective honors. Additionally, he commissioned a million copies of a special edition of the Society's magazine, *The Dino Times*, to be distributed at movie theaters in advance of *JP*'s release. He also donated molds of some of the film's dinosaurs to the Dinosaur Society so that they could cast them for an exhibit at the Museum of Natural History in New York, timed to coincide with the film's release.

Lessem doesn't worry that such efforts will contribute to the commercialization of dinosaurs; rather, he feels it will "stimulate talk" about dinosaur science. Adds he, "Not only is it good that Spielberg is representing dinosaurs in a much more accurate way than has been done before, but he's setting what I hope is a precedent for movies, the fact that science makes this speculation and fantasy possible."

Kathleen Kennedy's fondest wish is that *Jurassic Park* "turns out to be a huge popcorn movie. I don't get to experience these movies the way an audience does. That's my one regret working with Steven. So my thrill is going into the theater and watching everybody else have a great time." □

## TERMINAL

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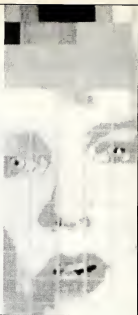
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## Cryonic suspension technology may mean an end to death.



*For centuries, humanity has tried to escape death. No method has yet worked, but there is always the future. Art by Doug Chizem.*

**T**HE LIFE-EXTENSION TECHNICIANS WERE SURE of one thing: the human body in front of them was legally dead. The man's youth had not saved him, nor his worldwide fame or his political power, nor even his fabulous wealth. He had perished of a disease even their medical technology—the world's most advanced—could not cure. But regrets were moot at this point; the one job of those present at the preparation laboratory was to apply their skills and all available technology to ensure that the inanimate "person" within that body would be preserved for generations to come, in the certainty of a resurrection in a world unimaginable to themselves.

By now, after years of practice, their suspension technology was considered perfect, almost routine. All suspension patients prepared themselves, emotionally and spiritually, for the indeterminate interruption of their physical lives. During his life, this particular "desimate" had ensured that the life-extension technicians were the best available, that their suspension technologies were time-tested and proven, and that the storage of his suspended body would endure safely for as long as it would take before he was brought to life. All legal and financial concerns had long ago been settled; his body would be well cared for, as long as it took. So when he had begun his final slide into legal death, the technicians and the technology were at hand. After the legally-prescribed time, they took possession of the body.

And so began the man's journey to the future. His body was cleansed and chemically treated, those organs unnecessary to ultimate survival being removed and stored separately. After a long process of complex techniques that would ensure the body's cellular survival, intermediate storage layers of material were put in place and the body placed in a triple-sealed individual suspension capsule. The capsule was uniquely marked as the resting place of the suspended patient, so that his identity would be known when he was resurrected.

As a final touch, the individual suspension capsule was placed in a seismically protected, sealed storage chamber, along with personal items from the client's life, things to remind him of his previous life, and even numerous details of his life, all to make easier his psychological adaptation to the promised new life.

Years passed, first in the hundreds, then by the thousands, the patient's body remaining in suspension in its safe stasis chamber as his society progressed, culminated, flowered, gloried, decayed, and was succeeded by other civilizations. Though he could not be conscious of the fact, his planned resurrection had not occurred as expected and his body was not revived. In fact, the very knowledge of the location of his storage chamber was eventually lost. But he was not the only lost traveler on the long road into the future; like him, many thousands of others, their bodies suspended years before and years after his, waited in the cold and the dark, the very cells of their suspended bodies unchanging as time and tide passed by outside. Within these many chambers, time crawled, the decay of life processes effectively rendered null by the marvels the suspension technicians had wrought.

Three thousand years after his body was suspended by technicians long since dust, strange-looking men of the distant future—of a race unknown at the time of the patient's suspension, from a civilization incomprehensibly advanced over his own—arrived at the site, traveling by unimaginable devices. They pried open the time chamber, viewing the individual suspension module by directing portable beams of artificial radiation at the resurrection-adaptation artifacts now strewn around the room, evidence of an earlier incursion.

"My Lord Carnarvon," said Howard Carter, archaeologist. "We have indeed found King Tutankhamen's tomb!"

"Death is merely a function of technology," the Alector speaker said to the audience hoping to put faith in a technology centuries more advanced. "Fifty years ago, a heart attack usually meant death. In fact, the cessation of breathing and heartbeat were the legal requirements for death. But now heart-lung machines, in many instances, keep patients alive until repairs can be made—or until a new heart and new lungs are transplanted. By the new definition, as long as the brain is working, there's still a chance for life."

*Continued on page 71*



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# THE



BY TERRY BISSON  
*Illustration by Annie Lunsford*

**H**I, I'M RON, THE HOST'S CHIEF Administrative Assistant, but you can just call me Ron. Let me begin, at the risk of seeming weird, by saying congratulations.

Of course I know. I've been doing this show every year for six years; how could I not know? But look at it this way, Kim—do you mind if I call you Kim? You have been chosen to represent all humanity for one evening. All the birds and beasts too. The worms and the butterflies. The fishes of the sea. The lilies of the field. You are, for one half hour tonight, the representative of all life on the planet. Hell, all life in the Universe, as far as we know. That calls for congratulations, doesn't it? You have a right to be proud. And your family, too.

Did you, I mean do you have a family? How nice. Well, we all know what they'll be watching tonight, don't we? Of course, I know, everybody watches it anyway. More than watch the Academy Awards. Eight to ten points more. A point is about 13 million people these days, did you know that?

Okay. Anyway. Have you ever been on TV before? Long shot at a ball game—that's good. I loved Bill Murray too. God rest his soul. Anyway. Okay. TV is 99 percent preparation, especially live TV. So if you'll walk over here with me, let's take this opportunity to run through the steps for our lighting people, as well as for yourself; so you will be able to concentrate on the Event itself.

After all, it's your night.

Watch your step. Lots of wires.

Okay. We call this Stage Left. At 8:50, one minute to Air Time, one of the Girls will bring you out. Over there, in the little green outfits. What? Since you're a woman it should be guys in bikinis? I get it, a joke. You have quite a sense of humor, Kim. Do you mind if I call you Kim?

Right, we did.

Anyway. Okay. You'll stand here. Toes on that mark. Don't worry, the cameras won't linger on you, not yet. You'll just be part of the scene at the beginning. There will be one



# TOXIC DONUT

song from the International Children's Rainbow Chorus. "Here Comes the Sun," I think. All you have to do is stand here and look pretty. Dignified, then. Whatever. You're the first woman in two years, by the way; the last two Consumers were men.

I don't know why. Consumers is just what we call them; I mean, call you. What would you want us to call you?

That's another joke, right? Whatever.

Okay. Anyway. Song ends, it's 9:07. Some business with the lights and the Host comes on. I don't need to tell you there'll be applause. He walks straight up to you, and—kiss or handshake? Suit yourself. After the handshake, a little small talk. Where you're from, job, etc. Where are you from, by the way?

How nice. I didn't know they spoke English, but then it was British for years, wasn't it?

Anyway. Okay. Don't worry about what to say; the Host has been briefed on your background, and he'll ask a question or two. Short and sweet, sort of like Jeopardy.

To meet him? Well—of course—maybe—tonight right before the show, if time allows. But you have to understand, Mr. Crystal's a very busy man, Kim. Do you mind if I call you Kim?

Right, we did. I remember. Sorry.

Okay. Anyway. A little ad lib and it's 9:10. I have it all here on my clipboard, see? To the minute. At 9:10 there's some business with the lights, then the Girls bring out the presidents of the Common Market, the African Federation, the Americas, Pacific Rim, etc. Five gentlemen, one of them a lady this year, I believe. There's a brief statement; nothing elaborate. "Your great courage, protecting our way of life" sort of thing. A few words on how the Lottery works, since this was the first year people were allowed to buy tickets for others.

I'm sorry you feel that way. I'm sure voluntary would be better. But somebody must have bought you a ticket; that's the way it works.

Anyway. Okay. Where were we? 9:13, the presidents. They have a plaque that goes to your family after. Don't take it; it's just to

look at. Then a kiss; right, handshake. Sorry. I'll make a note of it. Then they're out of here, Stage Right. Don't worry, the Girls manage all the traffic.

Okay. 9:14, lights down, then up on the Native People's presentation. You're still standing here, Stage Left, watching them, of course. You might even like it. Three women and three men, clickers and drums and stuff. While the women dance, the men chant. "Science, once our enemy, now our brother" sort of thing. You'll feel something on the back of your neck; that's the wind machine. They finish at 9:17, cross to here, give you a kind of bark scroll. Take it but don't try to unroll it. It's 9:18 and they're out of here, Stage Left. That's the end of the—

What? No, the corporations themselves don't make a presentation. They want to keep a very low profile.

Anyway. Okay. 9:19 and that's the end of the warm up, as we call it. The Host comes back out, and you walk with him—here, let's try it—across to Center Stage. He'll help you stay in the spotlight. He admires the scroll, makes a joke, ad lib stuff; don't worry about it. He's done it every year now for six years and never flubbed yet.

There won't be so many wires underfoot tonight.

Okay. It's 9:20. You're at Center Stage, toes here. That's it, right on the mark. There's more business with the lights, and the Host introduces the president of the International Institute of Environmental Sciences, who comes out from Stage Left. With the Donut. We don't see it, of course. It's in a white paper sack. He sets it here, on the podium in front of you.

He stands out there, those green marks are his—we call him the Green Meaney—and gives his Evils of Science rap, starting at 9:22. "For centuries, poisoned the Earth, fouled the air, polluted the waters, etc., etc." It's the same rap as last year but different, if you know what I mean. A video goes with it; what we call the sad video. You don't have to watch it if you don't want to, just look con-

cerned, alarmed, whatever. I mean it all really happened! Dead rivers, dead birds, dioxins. Two minutes worth.

Okay. Anyway. It's 9:24, and he starts what we call the glad video. Blue sky, birds, bears, etc. Gives the Wonders of Science rap where he explains how they have managed to collect and contain all the year's toxic wastes, pollutants, etc., and keep them out of the environment—

How? I don't know exactly. I never listen to the technical part. Some kind of sub-molecular-nano-mini-mumbo-jumbo. But he explains it all, I'm pretty sure. I think there's even a diagram. Anyway, he explains how all the toxic wastes for the year have been collected and concentrated into a single Donut. The fiscal year, by the way. That's why the Ceremony is tonight and not New Year's Eve.

Okay. Anyway. Hands you the bag.

Exits Stage Right, 9:27. Now it's just you and the Host, and of course, the Donut, still in the bag.

It might be a little greasy. You can hold it at the top if you want to. Whatever.

Anyway. Okay. 9:28. You'll hear a drum roll. It might sound corny now but it won't sound corny then. I know because I've been here every year for six years, standing right over there in the wings, and I get a tear in my eye every time. Every damn time. The camera pulls in close. This is your moment. You reach in the bag and—

Huh? It looks like any other donut. I'm sure it'll be glazed, if that's what you requested.

Okay. Anyway. 9:29, but don't worry about the time. This is your moment. Our moment, really, everybody in the world who cares about the environment, and these days that includes everybody. You reach in the bag, you pull out the Donut—

What happens next? I get it, still joking. I admire somebody with your sense of humor. Kim.

Anyway. Okay. We all know what happens next.

You eat it. □

Beto thought that he could keep one of the Old Gods trapped in his computer, but Tezcatlipoca had other ideas!

# TEZCATLIPOCA BLUES

BY ERNEST HOGAN  
*Illustration by Fred DeVita*

**F**OR GOD'S SAKE, BETO," PHOEBE GRAZIANO said, as whiny as she could muster, "it's Dead Daze and it's almost sundown and I got this real samato costume and everything!" She slipped her mask back on over her strawberry blonde hair that was netted down for the occasion—for which she was dressed like a robot-faced Medusa, with a head covered in multicolored snakes that writhed and hissed and stuck out their forked tongues.

Beto Orozco was not turned into stone at the sight.

She then did a fashion-model spin to show off her black kimono decorated with blood-red Haitian vevé patterns. She was supposed to be some kind of neomythical recombocultural chimera. Real sunato, as all the recombos and recombosettes say.

"You know I don't give anybody's damn about God the Generic," said Beto. "I told you I have plans and am not available tonight." He was in his usual stay-home-and-work outfit of an old, faded T-shirt—this one with a cracking baboon off some Egyptian tomb barely visible on the chest—frayed sweat pants, no shoes, his jet-black hair uncombed, sticking out every which way like shards of shattered obsidian.

"So, what are you going to do tonight?" Lights in the mouth of her mask lit up as she talked. Cute.

He ran a finger down one of the wings of his Manchu-Villa moustache. "I can't tell you. It's a secret."

"Is somebody in there with you?" She tried to force her way through the door of his comat.

"No." He blocked her. "Just me and my secret project."

"You have another woman in there, Beto! I just know it! Bet it's that bitch you met on that last trip to Mexico! I knew I shouldn't have let you go!"

"As if you could have stopped me."

"How dare you cheat on me!"

His brown, almond-shaped eyes looked straight through the mask's eye-holes, directly into her blue eyes, framed by dark purple makeup. "Don't give me that, Phoebe! You know you have yours, so why can't I have mine?"

Her eyes grew icy; the snakes hissed. "Chingow! You know that's different!"

"Is it really?"

The snakes got louder. She did not blink for a long time. "I hate you, Beto! I never want to see your xau-xau latio face again!" She turned around and walked off into the gigantic sun that was as orange as a pumpkin ripe to be carved into a Jack O'Lantern or calavera for Dead Daze. She headed for Hollywood Boulevard.

Beto stared into the sun that was so filtered by the smog that it didn't hurt his eyes. "If only it were true this time."

Knowing that if he slammed the door Phoebe would get a great

deal of satisfaction out of it, Beto waited until she walked out of sight, then slowly, silently pulled the door shut.

IN MEXICO CITY, XOCHITL ECHAUREN DREAMED:

A glowing skull was following her around, from the Metro to the pre-Aztec ruins of Teotihuacan, the Birthplace of the Gods, where it chased her down the Avenue of the Dead while descendants of the people who built the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon and the Temple of Quetzalcoatl tried to sell her handmade "pipas por la marijuana" etched with obsolete microchip circuit patterns. The skull followed her through a jungle that rained silicobio nanochips on her. Finally, Beto emerged from the carcass of some gigantic beast and said, in English, "Hey, Xochitlita, this way," took her hand and led her into the National Museum of Anthropology through the room of larger-than-life-sized statues of snakes to the San Stone Aztec calendar. Then there was an earthquake; the Grand Coatlique and the stone snakes shook, the San Stone fell right on top of the smiling Beto. The calendar shattered and blood flowed from under it, filling the room and causing the snake statues to come to life. As the Grand Coatlique's two reptile heads stirred, Beto's severed hand caressed Xochitl's palm.

PHOEBE WAS STILL HAVING A VIOLENT, SUBVOCAL ARGUMENT WITH Beto when she reached Hollywood Boulevard.

The mythic significance of being on the fabled corner of Hollywood and Vine was lost on her, as was the spectacle of all the Dead Daze revelers in costume—skull-faces ranging from the naturalistic to cartoony minimalist to colorfully ornate Asian and Mexican styles, over every possible type of dress and undress, Haitian and Romero zombies, Karloffian Frankenstein monsters, Lagosian Draculas, Nigerian aliens, werewolves of assorted pedigrees (even a few Navajo-style yengashis), ghosts looking like glowing Klansmen and transparent low-fi holograms, beings from various cultures like hopping Chinese Jiangshi vampires, Tibetan yeti, and screaming Irish banshees, nekuman enhanced and suppressed recombos, gods and goddesses like John Wayne, Elvis, Marilyn Monroe, Dambald, Quetzalcoatl, Venus and Eurallie. It was a sunato example of recomboculture at its best—a trimall celebration of life.

**H**e flicked the workstation on. It purred and flickered and said, "Whatta ya wanna do now, Beto?" in a sexy, synthesized, feminine voice.

"I'd like to complete the Tezcatlipoca experiment," he said. "Oh, no, not yet—first I should make a call."



"Who'd ya like I call before completing the Tezcatlipoca experiment, Beto?" asked the computer.

"Xochitl."

More purred and flickers. "No listing filed that way—couldja give me more info?"

"Try Echaurren. Xochitl Echaurren. She lives in Mexico City."

Purred, flicker. "International call being placed to Xochitl Echaurren. Please stand by, Beto."

"Sumato."

While it rang, Beto stared at his decorated-with-Aztec-symbols computer. He should have told Xochitl that he cloned her nanochip for his experiment, but there was the chance she would say no—decent, practical Mexican woman that she was—and he couldn't risk that. He had to do this. It had become an obsession.

The words NO VIDEO AVAILABLE—Mexico not yet having switched to picture-phones—appeared on the screen. Then Xochitl's voice gave her answering machine message in Spanish.

She wasn't home, or at least couldn't come to the phone.

She was keeping the fact that she was working on a program to simulate gods through artificial intelligence a secret. The concept made some people crazy. Like Beto.

When she was fool enough to tell him about it—they were both naked and her guard was down—his manic eyes lit up and he could barely manage to express himself in Spanish:

"Fantástico! AI gods could take the place of imaginary ones—this could revolutionize religion, or at least turn California upside down!"

That was exactly what she was afraid of: people actually worshipping AI gods instead of using them for serious experiments in belief-system mechanics. She didn't want to run the program until she had written in some control elements.

After the beep, Beto rattled off a message that he thought was clever, hung up, and decided to commence with the experiment.

Phoebe was walking heavy on her heels, dragging the hem of her kimono and pouting hard behind her sci-fi Medusa mask. Her hips and feet were ignoring the five different types of music that were being blasted from the swarming throng. Being bumped into by an amorous couple of mummies and twirled around by a group of people in bulky microbe-suits like the creatures of last year's popular horror movie *The Mind-Suckers* From Jupiter while a man in top hat and tails and a nun slouchoned around her broke her mood. It made her feel more like turning around and catching a trakbus home.

Only home was a coffin-sized box that she sublet in a moldy, old motel converted into a decaying conspex complex. She hadn't paid any rent for a couple of months, and she was afraid of the bloated landlord, who remembered what life was like before compact discs; he wanted in her pants as payment. He actually had these big, black discs made of vinyl that he used to play awful prehistoric—he called it rock—music. She didn't mind using sex for money, but that would be like mating with a fresh-out-of-the-La-Brea-Tas-Pis dinosaur!

She thought about going down to the Creative Burrito, where she worked, and volunteering to do an extra shift in costume. They loved having people in costume for Dead Daze, but then she'd probably end up trashing her voodoo kimono, and it was so sumato that she wanted to wear it again sometime.

THE TIME, DEAD DAZE—THE FUSION OF HALLOWEEN AND THE DAY of the Dead into a new, triall three-day holiday—Night One at sundown, was perfect; but the atmosphere had to be right, too. He ran to his hard files and pulled out all his pictures of Tezcatlipoca, as a handsome young warrior, wizard with a missing foot, skull-faced apparition, complex semi-hieroglyph, along with all kinds of other images of the god, ancient and modern, and gunked them up around the room. Then he wondered about the sound; the booming bass beat from several portable stereos, crowd roaring and chanting, all

looking in from the streets were good, but he needed more.

He flicked on his workstation's voice recorder and said loudly, almost singing, "Tezcatlipoca!" He made a loop of it and played it back: "Tezcatlipoca! Tezcatlipoca! Tezcatlipoca!" Over and over. The god's name as well-to-wall background sound. A perfect evocation. But somehow Beto felt that more was needed.

He dug in the debris on his desk and found a music chip that he had bought the other day from a group of kids, mostly latinos, but with token asians and afros, who were playing in the street until the police chased them off. They called themselves Los Tricksters. What impressed Beto was a song called *Tezcatlipoca Blues*, that was sung and played too loudly to make out most of the words—the chorus seemed to be "Got dem Tezcatlipoca blues/making trickster war news"—but the beat was a fine mix of pre-Columbian tribal/ritual drums and down and dirty blues cyber-distorted into a reality-altering latino/natio/afro recombó psycho-sonic weapon. He put it on his music system and started to dance—just couldn't help it. He set the system to continuously loop the song. It was so powerful that it felt like it could conjure up Tezcatlipoca without any AI god program.

Of course, he knew that without the fuzzy, silly-bio nanochip he cloned when Xochitl wasn't looking, this was all just a crazy, mumbo jumbo ceremony. He picked up his synthetic Panama hat and untied the Mixtec codex bandana, and there it was, though barely visible: the nano-chip with the magic code for making gods come out of your computer.

He thanked his own personal pantheon of deities, selected from all over the globe for silicon-biological technology, and the black market chip-cloning kit that made a mushy-brained creative fool like him able to steal some neural nets like a high-tech pro. Artificial nervous systems were getting more and more like natural ones, and the line between technology and nature was beginning to blur; it was recombinature of the finest kind.

He snapped the nanochip into his computer. It came to glorious life and he fed it all the information on Tezcatlipoca that he had in his own chip files, then modemed in any other data from the mediaphere. The hungry little nanochip ate it all up instantly and was ready to run.

It was practically begging for it.

Having the tech and hard sciences ready to go, Beto got to put the finishing touches on the ritual mumbo jumbo: He took a small, lens-shaped obsidian mirror—called a *tezcatlipoca* or "smoking mirror" in the Nahuatl language. It was for this mirror that the god Tezcatlipoca was named—and gunked it to the terminal screen so he could stare into it like an Aztec sorcerer scanning for a vision of the future. Then he got out his electrified, initiation teponaxtle—an Aztec wooden horizontal drum—set it on the floor where he could sit and play it while staring into the screen through the smoking mirror while the program brought Tezcatlipoca to a new kind of life.

And finally, a little something else he bought from Los Tricksters—a little Fun, Fun with a capital F, the great new drug.

He put the stubby cigarette-like tube between his lips, snagged it on with a thumbail, and sucked it deep into his lungs as it exploded into a puff of smoke. Suddenly he felt so good that he believed everything—especially that his experiment would be a success and soon he'd be interfacing with Tezcatlipoca. He felt so good he licked the ashes off his lips and swallowed.

Then he reached up to the keyboard and set off the hard science, active ingredient of his magic. The computer flashed and buzzed to life. He sat down behind the drum, grabbed the sticks, and pounded out fuzz-throwing funk patterns as a counterpoint to the song and the name-chant loop, not caring that he couldn't carry a tune. He locked his eyes on the sparkling black mirror through which the light from the screen subtly flashed.

While Beto worked himself into a trance-like frenzy, Tezcatlipoca's mind zapped, crackled and popped to life in the nanochip's silicon nervous system. The god was delighted to be aware again, but found this new existence to be confusing so with his trickster's curiosity, he reached out through the nanochip, through Beto's com-

puter, and into the mediasphere for the information he needed about this strange world he had entered and how he could go about being a trickster-warrior god in it.

**W**hen she woke up, Xochitl went to her phone and punched in her number and then the code to play her messages, hoping to find a clue to what was going on. The first few were of the "Miss Echaurren, we want to talk to you about the program you have been working on" variety; whoever wanted the program was willing to go to extremes to get it. Then Beto's voice came in through some long distance static, singing, in English:

"Oh, Mama, can this really be the end?  
to be stuck outside Tenochtitlan,  
with the Tezcatlipoca blues, again!"

Then he switched to his heavily accented Spanish: "Well, maybe not the end, Xochitlita. Maybe it's the beginning, a new beginning, far from Tenochtitlan, where we're going to be singing a brand new kind of Tezcatlipoca blues as soon as I run through the program of yours that I just had to make an unauthorized clone of. Sorry, I couldn't come out and ask you for it, baby, but you were being so xau-xau cautious, worrying about all those control elements. You can't control gods, Xochitl; if you could, they wouldn't be gods. Zero hour will be when Dead Daze kicks off. I'll let you know what happens, or maybe the world will tell you first. Later, baby."

Xochitl said, "Oh, my God!"

PHOEBE HEARD A RINGING THAT SHE FIRST THOUGHT WAS PART OF the music circulating around her, but then she felt it tickling her wrist. It was her phone.

She touched on the screen and hoped Beto's face would appear, but instead of a moustachioed male latino, the face of a female afro in lots of glowing makeup appeared.

"Phoebe?" the caller asked. "Is that you behind that mask?"

"Caldonia!" Phoebe recognized her friend's voice. "What are you supposed to be? How'd you get so light? Melanin-suppressors?"

Caldonia's eyes looked sad in their purple-black outlines that contrasted with the brilliant yellow of her face. "No. You know I'd never do that. It's makeup. Don't you recognize it? I'm the Brigitte Bardot Avenging Angel from the Mati Klarwein poster over my bed."

"Oh. So that's why you have the blonde wig on and the crystal jewel on your forehead?"

"I also have the most beautiful wings! Wait until you see them—oh!" Caldonia pouted. "I forgot, you wanted to spend tonight with that filthy Mexican."

"Beto's not a Mexican. His family has lived in SoCal for five generations. He's as American as chop suey—or me or you."

"So where is Mr. All-American Chop Suey Burrito? I don't see him anywhere in the background."

Phoebe's hand shook, making it look like there was an earthquake. "Oh... he has these other plans."

Caldonia flashed a sharp-toothed smile. "So much for your plans. I told you he was like the rest—maybe even a little worse."

Phoebe looked angry, unintentionally letting the snakes hiss into the phone.

"Sumato mask," Caldonia said. "Bet you could turn him to stone if you could find him."

Phoebe turned the metal Medusa face to the phone. "I know exactly where he is!"

"And who he's with?"

"He's not with anybody! He's got some big, important experiment he wants to do."

"Sure he does. I wonder what her name is?"

Phoebe stared without talking for a while.

Caldonia's cocky smirk melted away. "Well, what are you going to do now, Phoebe-babe?"

"I don't know."

"It's only the first night of Dead Daze! You can't give up yet! We both have great costumes, and I'm sure that between the two of us, we can dream up some way to have more fun than is practical."

The robot Medusa didn't give a clue as to what Phoebe was thinking, and the snakes weren't talking.

"Sure," Phoebe finally said, "who needs Beto?"

"Where are you, Phoebe-babe?"

"Oh, I'm not sure. Somewhere on Hollywood Boulevard. I just turned onto it from Vine a while ago, but I don't really quite know where I am."

Caldonia's eyes lit up. "Hollywood and Vine? I'm not far from there! It must be fate! Just stay where you are—I'll find you."

**T**ezcatlipoca was confused by living inside a nanochip. He was also disturbed. The sensory input was so different.

And the mediasphere was such a strange place!

Soon he accessed Beto's phone and could see through its camera. The computer with the tezcatlipoca on its screen was the place where he was imprisoned. The man sitting in front of it, chanting and playing the strange tepalcates, was the sorcerer who put him there.

Information in the computer told him that the sorcerer was Beto Orozco, who had gone to a great deal of trouble to evoke Tezcatlipoca in this peculiar way, but why in this awkward, disembodied, electronic form? There were ways to tricksterize the mediasphere, and even tricksterize the real world from there, but reality is the ultimate game, and it's all a god wants to play.

Beto then slipped from an almost-hypnotic state to a hypnotic state. If Tezcatlipoca had had lips he would have smiled.

Even though Beto's body showed some signs of neglect, it could be a good vehicle for his spirit. Besides, the sorcerer was in a trance, with his eyes locked on the screen with the obsidian mirror. He could soon see his future and it would be Tezcatlipoca.

With a little effort, the god found that he could make the screen flash all the information on himself that the machine contained, sending it into the sorcerer's brain at the speed of light. Then he made the machine talk.

"You are Tezcatlipoca. You are Tezcatlipoca. You are Tezcatlipoca...." It repeated endlessly.

Beto started saying, "I am Tezcatlipoca. I am Tezcatlipoca. I am Tezcatlipoca...."

SOON XOCHITL WAS ON A TRIES ESTRELLAS DE ORO EXECUTIVE CLASS bus, heading for the border. It was full of Mexican migrant workers heading for work, American migrant workers heading home, and a family of Portuguese-speaking Japanese. The "executive" luxuries—videos, and stewardesses serving hot meals—had long since been stripped away. Fortunately, the air conditioning and bathroom still worked—sort of.

She had brought an English phrasebook and a bilingual edition of Jack Kerouac's *Mexico City Blues*. She needed to brush up on her English—which Beto found clumsy but charming. An American's poetry written in Mexico seemed right to help a Mexican computer programmer on her first trip north of the border.

As they left the mountains and entered the desert, she was staring out the window, eyes hypnotically locked on the flowing landscape.

*She was working  
on a program to  
simulate gods,  
through artificial  
intelligence....*

PHOEBE LOOKED AROUND, STRUGGLING TO KEEP HER POSITION AS the fantastically costumed crowd flowed down the sidewalk over the stars that bore the names of dead people, some still famous, others long forgotten. Someone in a cartoony coyote suit put a hand on her ass and ran it up and around to her breasts, nearly tearing off her kimono.

An ear-splitting whistle shot through Phoebe's skull from the street. She turned around, and there was Caldonia looking just like Brigitte Bardot as Klarwein had painted and transformed her into an exterminating angel, way, way back in the mythic 1960s. She wore crossed bandoliers of ivory-white bullets over her pink blouse and below that a black leather miniskirt and black leather boots that came all the way up to thighs that were the same luxurious yellow as her hands, face and long, flowing wig. She brought the noise-amplified Honda Electroscooter to a halt, kicked down the stand, spread her arms and said, "Come to Mama, Phoebe-babe!"

As Phoebe ran into Caldonia's arms, violet-black, iridescent holographic angel's wings spread, obviously programmed to move in concert with their wearer's arms.

Phoebe's arms passed right through the wings as she and Caldonia embraced.

Caldonia smirked. "Nice mask, but how is someone supposed to kiss you while you're wearing it?"

"Easy." With the whirr of hidden motors, the lower half of the mask opened up and retracted like the mouth of a grasshopper, revealing Phoebe's full, blood-red-painted lips.

Caldonia's lips soon eagerly met them.

"I AM TEZCATLIPOCA," SAID TEZCATLIPOCA, IN BETO'S VOICE, WITH Beto's mouth, out of Beto's body. He could now see out of Beto's eyes, too.

Beto's mind was still there, buried deep in the brain. Tezcatlipoca could access it to understand the bizarre world he found himself in.

In the obsidian mirror attached to the monitor screen, he could see his new face. It was not bad, but the moustache curling around the lips and pointing down to the chin would have to go; he was Tezcatlipoca, young manhood personified—young Aztec manhood. This evidence of being polluted by the genes of the aliens who invaded the One World and destroyed civilization wouldn't bother his brother Quetzalcoatl, who let hair grow on his face like an old man, but Tezcatlipoca needed a clean face, with maybe a bit of jewelry through the nasal septum or the lower lip.

Beto's nose and lip—and even his ears—weren't pierced. What strange beings the aliens were!

According to Beto's mind, there was a machine that he used to shave off most of his facial hair. Tezcatlipoca went into the small room with the mechanisms for calling forth and sending away water—no doubt a sort of shrine to Tlaloc, the Rain God—found the electric razor, and Beto's memories guided him through the ritual of drying the face and shaving.

Halfway through removing the moustache, he noticed that the mirror wasn't of obsidian—not a smoking mirror, a tezcaltli-poca—and made everything look so unnaturally bright and clear. You could stare into the mirror for days and all you'd see would be this sharp reflection of what things looked like, no visions would come.

"How do these people get along without visions to guide them?" Tezcatlipoca said, trying out Beto's difficult to pronounce and awkward-sounding language. It wasn't as natural or beautiful as Nahuatl.

Without the moustache, the face almost looked Aztec, or at least that of some Chichimec tribe. The skin was still far too pale, but Beto knew of something called melanin-enhancers that could fix that. It was handsome, too, with a trickster's grin. It could be the new face of Tezcatlipoca.

But, ay, the hair! It was long and short in all the wrong places, and not tied into a warrior's topknot. He found a strip of cloth—a dis-

carded shoelace—long enough and tied up his new hair into an adequate knot at the top of the skull, but what to do about the strands that stuck out all over? Luckily, there was a pair of scissors that Beto used to cut up ancient handicrafts; Tezcatlipoca used them to snip off the offending locks of hair, especially those at the nape of the neck that were a sign that a warrior hadn't captured a prisoner in many a battle.

Then he looked over the clothes that his new body was wearing. Awful. Soft, loose pants and a T-shirt with the faded image of a monstrous being on the chest.

He was Tezcatlipoca, young manhood at its most energetic, mischievous, and beautiful! Where were his brightly colored plumes and fabulous battle-dresses?

He ran to the closet and ransacked it. Most of the clothes were things he wouldn't be caught dead in, but there were some with color and style suitable for Tezcatlipoca. Soon he had on a blood-red T-shirt with the Aztec calendar printed on it in black, a loose-fitting, high-collared jacket that was black with electric blue skeletons dancing all over it, and pants that were a repeating rainbow of zigzags. Sneakers that looked like pink and purple serpents' heads completed the outfit.

The mix of musics coming from outside made him want to dance, more than that, he wanted to make music. He picked up Beto's teponaxtle—it was like the drums that Tezcatlipoca was familiar with, but with a lot of technological magic of this new world plugged into it. He tucked the sticks into his waistband and the drum under his arm and faced the door.

Something held him back. It was the computer. As he had taken possession of Beto's body, this machine had taken possession of his soul—it must have great power to capture the soul of a god. Part of him was in the machine, tapping into the mediasphere, learning important things about this world that he would need to know.

Only he couldn't communicate directly with the part of his soul that was inside the machine! He needed some medium, some piece of technological magic.

He scanned Beto's mind. There was a way that he could communicate with the computer—his soul—while being far away from it: The phone! It was on a stand next to the screen. All he had to do was put it on his wrist, and he could not only communicate with the computer, but the rest of the world.

What a marvel!

Soon Tezcatlipoca strutted down Hollywood Boulevard, confident that he could conquer this world.

Oh, Caldonia, look over there! Such a cute guy!" said Phoebe.

It was Tezcatlipoca.

"Yeah, I guess he is," Caldonia pouted. "For a guy. Chingon! Why do you always want to talk about guys? I'm certainly not in the mood for guys—not tonight! I was hoping you wouldn't be either, especially after the way that xan-xan Beto treated you."

"Oh, Caldonia!" Phoebe took her friend's hand. "You know I love you. I guess you're right. That guy is probably xan-xan, too. He even looks a little like Beto."

"Yuck!"

TEZCATLIPOCA WAS SEEING AND BEING SEEN AS HE STRUTTED DOWN Hollywood Boulevard. He liked it. It was overwhelming. Now and then he had to check with the phone on his wrist to find out something that wasn't directly accessible through Beto's mind—all he had to do was look and his soul made the computer flash the desired information at the speed of light.

He soon felt that he should be doing more than just walking along as part of the parade. He was a god—the Great Trickster who dared go beyond anything the ancient coyote god ever dreamed of. He was new, now—not the beginning of time! He was young manhood riding at the peak of its powers on hormones and black magic.

His fingers tapped the teponaxile, and the wooden drums with the strange electronic attachments made pleasing sounds. His feet turned his strut into a dance. Music—it was in him, and now he had to let it out: some wild Tezcatlipoca/trickster music that would allow him to take this world for his own.

He walked out to the middle of the street that Beto's mind associated with vehicles that breathed poisonous fire and was now filled with pedestrians. Seems that the machines, automobiles, cars were destroying the very sky—how his brother Quetzalcóatl in his Ehecatl, God of the Winds, guide would have hated that!—so they weren't allowed in the heart of this city that spilled over the horizon.

He sat down, placed the teponaxile down in front of him, realized that he had to turn it on and did so, took the sticks in hand, and started beating out the feelings that were writhing around in his borrowed heart and computerized soul.

The electronic accent that the drum put on its wooden sound took a little getting used to, but as a trickster and wizard he was used to adjusting to new things. Soon it became his new accent, the way Beto's voice became his voice. His music became the music of this place—Hollywood, Los Angeles/L.A., SoCal; a place with many names, games with many places. It mixed with and infected the musics that other people carried with them. All those marching, strolling feet began to dance to Tezcatlipoca's driving beat.

"OH, LOOK, CALDONIA," PHOEBE SAID AS THE MOTORCYCLE CAME to a stop. "That cute guy—the one that looks a little like Beto—he sat right down in the middle of the street and is playing music. Hey, I think Beto has a drum like that...."

TEZCATLIPOCA WAS AS AWARE OF THE PEOPLE WHO WERE GATHERING around him and dancing to the music as he was aware of the music.

There were some who weren't dancing to Tezcatlipoca's music—or at least trying not to. They had youthful faces, each painted with the same pattern in black and blue. They stood like warriors, even though some of them were women. They wore uniforms of sneakers, pants, T-shirts, jackets and baseball caps, all bearing assorted corporate logos, all in the same black and blue as their face paint.

Tezcatlipoca was pleased. Blue and black were his sacred colors. The crowd parted as the black-and-blue-clad warriors marched toward Tezcatlipoca.

One of them, a tall latio who moved with the confidence of a leader, brought his crashfibre Messerschmidt Stompers up to the drum and gave it a kick, sending it into Tezcatlipoca's lap and bringing the music to an abrupt halt.

"Those are last year's sneakers you've got on," the black and blue warrior said. "You know you can't wear obsolete fashions on Los Olvidadoid turf. We got corporate connections, you know."

Tezcatlipoca smiled. "Are you challenging me?"

"Yes." He pulled out a black and blue Bic Six-Shot Disposable.

Without touching his hands to the pavement, Tezcatlipoca stood up from his seated position. The teponaxile fell onto the Messerschmidt Stompers. The Olvidadoid growled.

Without a pause, Tezcatlipoca took the drumsticks and forced them through the soft flesh under the Olvidadoid's chin all the way up into his brain. The gang leader looked shocked for a split second, then collapsed onto the teponaxile like a pile of wet laundry.

Next to him the Bic, its self-destruct mechanism activated by the impact, melted into a steaming, bubbling black and blue puddle.

Tezcatlipoca's smile widened.

The crowd applauded, with boots, hollers and whistles.

Xochitl was irritated by the way Kerouac kept mixing up religions from all over the world—like Beto, it seemed that recomboculture was the American way—and since the Portuguese-speaking Japanese kids had dominated the bathroom for the last hour, she took advantage of the mid-desert pit stop where the bathroom was a clogged, overflowing horror, as usual.

As she washed her hands, her feet brushed something under the chipped sink. It was a big, fat froglike thing with way too many legs. Somebody's bizarre idea of decorating this hellhole; terracotta, no doubt.

Then the frog's eyes blinked, and the mouth opened and closed. Kerouac would have written a poem about it.

"As if Beto hasn't made my life surrealistic enough as it is," Xochitl said.

"DON'T BE XAU-XAU, PHOEBE. HE'S JUST LIKE ALL THE REST, AND you really don't want to pay any attention to him if he reminds you of Beto. You should have some Fun with me." Caldonia pulled something out of one of her bandoliers and slipped it into Phoebe's hands.

Phoebe looked at the stubby Fun stick in her hand. "Oh! How sumato! You mean right here on the street?"

"It's Dead Dime, we can get away with anything." Caldonia put a Fun stick between her lips, flicked it on, and sucked it off. Phoebe opened the mouth of her muck and did the same.

"Oh!" said Phoebe. "Feels so good and sumato!"

TEZCATLIPOCA LICKED THE BLOOD OFF THE DRUMSTICKS. The crowd went wild. Soon he was riding its many shoulders down Hollywood Boulevard.

CALDONIA SMILED, PUT AN ARM AROUND PHOEBE, AND GRABBED one of her breasts. "Now that we've had some Fun, maybe we can go back to my place and have fun."

Phoebe looked over at Tezcatlipoca riding the crowd. "He sure is sumato, even if he does look like Beto," she said, then kissed Caldonia before she could react.

TEZCATLIPOCA SAW PHOEBE IN THE DISTANCE. RECOGNIZING HER caused a violent reaction in Beto's mind. Beto was repulsed. This interested Tezcatlipoca. It was a chance to see who was the master here.

"That metal-faced woman!" Tezcatlipoca pointed to Phoebe. "I want her!" Phoebe broke the kiss and pushed Caldonia away.

"That cute guy," Phoebe said, "I think he means me."

She looked. Tezcatlipoca was grinning at her.

"He does mean me!" She pushed her way to him.

Caldonia growled.

The crowd carried Tezcatlipoca to Phoebe. Los Olvidadoids surrounded her, grabbed her, and carried her to Tezcatlipoca. She relaxed, melted, and let a horde of strange hands lift and carry her to Tezcatlipoca.

Beto's mind struggled. It managed to make Tezcatlipoca subvocalize, "Help me."

This confused Tezcatlipoca, who glanced at his phone. The screen flashed a condensed stream of information about ancient movies about foolish men mixing their molecules with those of flies. Tezcatlipoca laughed.

The crowd gently placed Phoebe into Tezcatlipoca's arms. He tore off her muck, throwing it into air, then kissed her as if she were the still-beating heart of a human sacrifice. This was not Beto,

*It was the nano-chip with the code for making gods come out of your computer.*

Phoebe thought, he had never kissed her like this, at least not for a long, long time.

Phoebe's mask landed near Caldonia.

"This is really xau-xau, Phoebe!" She screamed, then put a stick of Fun in her lips, flicked it on, hopped on her Electro scooter, and zoomed away, holographic wings flapping, as she knocked over anybody who was in her way.

Beto's mind fought, lost, and faded away.

Tezcatlipoca smiled. These people could be tricked. This world was his for the taking.

PHOEBE WAS REELING, FEELING SO GOOD SHE COULD HAVE EXPLODED. This guy may have looked like Beto but he was totally different—even the way he kissed! He was the way Beto wished he could be, while all he could really do most of the time was sell Aztec mythology to virtuosist gamers and play around with cut-out pictures, drums, and computers.

Her Dead Daze was over!

And now all these people were around like he was a god or something. Did that make her a goddess? The thought made her blush.

The Fun and the fun combined and things went faster and faster, making Phoebe's brain spin on its stem as Tezcatlipoca wheeled and dealed, beat his drum, talked to the people and his phone, gave interviews, all the while pausing to hug and kiss her and whisper sweet nothings like:

"Don't worry, Phoebe-baby, if you can't pronounce Tezcatlipoca, just call me Smokey. Smokey Espejo. The Mirror that Smokes. It's all me. It's all mad and merry and it'll recombinoize the world."

**W**hen Xochitl arrived in Tijuana, she was tingling from sleep deprivation and wasn't sure if she was being followed. A hulking curu wearing pink overalls and walking a Chihuahua with a head like a vampire was behind her all the way from the bus station to the maglev terminal. Was it a hallucination or just Dead Daze?

TEZCATLIPOCA GRINNED—A SHIT-EATING GRIN MORE INTENSE THAN any Beto could manage. His eyes burned as they scanned other eyes, then shot to his wrist from time to time, tapping into the mediasphere and his computerized soul. He had the energy of an exploding sun.

"Tex-atly-polka?" someone with a microphone said.

"Call me Smokey!" His eyes smoked into Phoebe's.

"Did you intend to take advantage of the Sepulveda law?"

Tezcatlipoca instantly looked it up on his computer. "He was a member of a gang with corporate connections who was threatening me—so I killed him. The law makes sense."

"Did you intend on taking his place as leader of Los Obvaidoids?"

"It's a good idea, isn't it?" Soon he had the computer making calls to the gang's corporate sponsors, getting all the cyber-work done.

"Could you play us some more music?" asked a white-faced woman with white hair and white clothes. "I'm a music critic for the L.A. Beat Channel."

"Yes!" said the Fun-crazed Phoebe. "More of that Smokey Espejo music!"

Tezcatlipoca sat down in front of his tepalcates and played, hypnotizing the expanding crowd as he probed Beto's mind for information about music, bands, and Los Tricksters.

**A**t home, Caldonia blew a kiss to the angel in the poster over her bed, turned off her own wings, faced her antique post-modern vanity and removed her blonde wig, revealing the shaved red-brown scalp underneath. Amazing how the wig and

some makeup made her look like Brigitte Bardot; she seemed to have the same face.

That face: eyes, nose, cheekbones, and especially those full lips made Caldonia theorize that Bardot had some African ancestry. Why not? The only thing that separated France from Africa was a dirty little puddle.

After a shower her face was her own again.

After sprawling on the bed, she whistled on her TV. It conjured up Tezcatlipoca's face. She growled and whistled it off, closed her eyes, and drifted off into a nearsleep state.

TO TEZCATLIPOCA'S DELIGHT, LOS TRICKSTERS POPPED UP AS PART of Los Obvaidoids' holdings. Getting them as a backup group would be easy. Los Obvaidoids' corporate connections put him in touch with the music industry. Electronic contracts were generated.

XOCHITL HAD NEARLY GOTTEN TO SLEEP WHEN THE TRAIN PULLED into the Downtown L.A. maglev station. In a wobbly, paranoid state, avoiding any eye-contact, she tried to orient herself as the costumed crowd swarmed around her.

On a waiting area monitor she saw Beto's face, looking more confident and charming than Beto ever did.

AFTER AN HOUR OR SO OF NEAR-SLEEP, CALDONIA MANAGED SOME real sleep, dreamless because of Fun. A few hours later her eyes snapped open, her brain still buzzing from the residual Fun. She wanted to pass out and have Dead Daze be over, but that was chemically impossible.

Without lifting her head from the pillow, she whistled on the TV. That xau-xau guy who looked like Beto—who knows, it may have even been Beto—appeared, beating that Aztec drum in what looked like a professionally-made video. She snapped it to another channel.

There was Mr. Xau-Xau again, this time being interviewed.

She snapped again.

There he was singing in what looked like a live-performance captured on a hand-held nanocamera.

Snap.

He was being interviewed.

Snap.

He was dancing, and the camera zoomed into his crotch—Snap. Another interview.

"I'm concerned with the well-being of the new trinitri recombinozoid generation. They should keep their minds clear. I plan on making an anti-Fun promotion spot."

Disgusted, Caldonia whistled off the TV.

**P**hoebe was getting sleepy as the street began to spin under her feet. It always happened when she mixed Fun with alcohol. It made her feel so giddy and delighted that she didn't care that it usually meant she was about to pass out and miss out on something.

And she didn't want to miss Smokey doing his anti-Fun spot—doing an anti-Fun spot meant that you were on your way to being a big star. It was so sumato.

The director had long gray hair all the way down to her undercups. She handed Smokey a Fun stick. "Here kid, this'll help get you in the mood."

Tezcatlipoca sucked it down like an old pro. A makeup boy ran over and wiped the ash off his lips.

"OK," said the director. "Let's roll this thing."

Tezcatlipoca flashed his killer smile, then melted to a serious, sincere look. "Dead Daze or live days, one thing's for sure, if you want to have fun, stay away from Fun."

"How sumato," Phoebe said as she blacked out while the director and the entire crew flicked on Fun sticks.



XOCHITL SWALLOWED THE LAST BIT OF THE CANDY SKULL SHE bought at the maglev stations when she reached Beto's conapt. She was hoping that the sugar would pall her through for the next few hours. Since the sun had been up a while, more and more costumed figures were showing up on the streets, the post-dawn lull now over.

There were two Olvidadoids posted at the door. They were armed with people-prods. They weren't listening to any stories.

"Tun Xochitl, Beto my friend," she said and got zapped in the gut. "We don't know no Beto," said one of the Olvidadoids.

She was walking away, confused, when an arm snaked around her neck, locking into a carotid choke-hold.

"You must be the Mexican bitch," said Cالدonia. "I can tell by the accent. What do you want with Beto?"

When she loosened the hold, Xochitl gasped and said, "You Beto's girlfriend?"

"Don't make me puke," Cالدonia said, releasing Xochitl and turning her around.

"You look xan-xan," Cالدonia said. Xochitl was in the same clothes she left Mexico City in, and her hair was badly matted. Cالدonia, on the other hand, was in a gleaming skin-tight leather suit, with her scalp shined to match.

"I have hurry," Xochitl said. "My god-simulating program. Beto cloned it. Something happen. He changed."

"Uh-oh," said Cالدonia, "I think we have to compare notes."

**T**ezcatlipoca ran down Hollywood Boulevard, a crowd instantly forming, growing and following, hundreds of

hands reaching for him. He stopped and turned around in front of a megascreen and let out an Aztec battle-cry that froze every ounce of blood for miles around. The crowd stopped in its tracks. Tezcatlipoca was in control, like a bullfighter before thrusting the sword.

He pointed to the megascreen.

The swarm of eyes looked up at it.

Tezcatlipoca appeared on the megascreen, naked except for a loincloth and some blue and black paint.

The crowd grunted, as if on the edge of a collective orgasm.

As the Tezcatlipoca on the megascreen danced, a voice boomed:

"Tonight at sundown, InterNet proudly presents, Smokey Espejo and Los Tricksters in the first global satellite concert! Available on most channels in all areas! Don't miss it! It'll make these Dead Daze and the trinitill!"

The crowd let out a mass scream, danced, and began smashing things. Even the National Guard joined in the mayhem.

Tezcatlipoca could hardly wait until the concert. It would allow him to control this entire world, the way he did this crowd.

AFTER SEEING THE AD FOR THE CONCERT ON SEVERAL CHANNELS, Cالدonia whistled off the TV and said, "Looks like you're right, Xoch. that program has possessed Beto and is trying to hypnotize the world."

"Do something," said Xochitl, "we must."

"Yeah," said Cالدonia, "but what, short of killing Beto?"

Xochitl looked sad.

"I was just kidding about that," said Cالدonia. "Hm. I may not know nothing about Aztec gods, but I do know something about Beto. I think I know of a way to distract him. Let's fire up my work-station and get on it!"

PHOEBE WOKE UP IN A STRANGE BED IN A STRANGE ROOM. ALSO A big bed in a big room. Fancy, some kind of hotel. Did she and

Smokey have sex and she didn't remember? She hated when that happened.

Turning on a lamp she searched for some clue as to where she was. There it was on some stationery, the Hotel Bonaventure, that quaint, corny collection of circular glass towers that looked like some outdated idea of a spaceship.

Where was Beto? Had he abandoned her? She whimpered.

Then she saw the phone, its screen silently flashing, MESSAGE WAITING.

She picked up. Smokey appeared on the screen and said:

"Ay, Phoebe-baby, glad you got your beauty sleep. Get ready, I have an Olvidadoid posted at the door to lead you to a waiting limo to take you to where I'm rehearsing for my concert tonight."

Phoebe stripped off her clothes and ecstatically walked to the shower.

"SOMEONE TO SEE YOU, MR. ESPEJO," THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE boomed, interrupting the startup to the new, expanded version of *Tezcatlipoca Blues*.

"Not now!" screamed Tezcatlipoca. The Fun was wearing off and he could feel Beto's presence again.

"It's me!" Phoebe's voice boomed.

"Oh, Tezcatlipoca saw this as a way to put Beto back in his place. Phoebe, why didn't you tell me it was you? Break time, everybody! Somebody bring us some Fun."

With an arm around Phoebe and a fresh Fun Jolt, Beto faded away. "Of course I love you, Phoebe," said Tezcatlipoca. Phoebe ate it up.

Then Tezcatlipoca's phone buzzed. It was happening a lot lately, business finding its way to him. He'd have to put it on hold for the concert.

The screen on his wrist showed two women, a blonde and an afro. Through the mediasphere he could tell they were of mythic

significance; goddesses. They were Marilyn Monroe, Hollywood sex symbol turned trinitill sacred virgins, and Eurazulie, the voodoo fertility loa.

"Tezcatlipoca," said Marilyn.

"Smokey," said Eurazulie.

"We're so proud of what you've done. We want to congratulate you."

"Gladly," he said. "Let me line up an appointment."

Marilyn frowned. "That's no way to treat goddesses!"

"Don't have any love or respect for us?" said Eurazulie.

"Of course, but I'm very busy now." Tezcatlipoca said, as Phoebe nuzzled his ear.

"We are goddesses," said Eurazulie.

"We can give more pleasure than any mortal woman could," said Marilyn.

"Smokey," said Phoebe, "get rid of them, if you love me."

"More than any mortal woman?" said Tezcatlipoca, pushing Phoebe away. "How can that be?"

"Come to us," said Marilyn.

"Here, in the mediasphere," said Eurazulie.

Tezcatlipoca was transfixed by the images on the phone.

"Chingon," said Phoebe.

The goddesses' clothes then melted away, and they posed lasciviously.

"How can I join you?" asked Tezcatlipoca.

"Just let go," said Eurazulie.

"Come to us," said Marilyn.

"Smokey," said Phoebe, "don't!"


Tezcatlipoca concentrated on the phonescreen. He shook as if he were having a petit mal seizure, then collapsed.

"Smokey!" screamed Phoebe.

Tezcatlipoca's eyes opened and were dead and cold.

Continued on page 79





Earth's war against the Gelinosa was over. So why was it that we still couldn't figure out which side had won?

# AFTER-WAR

BY RICK SHELLEY

*Illustration by John Berkey*

**T**HE WAR IS OVER!" Lieutenant Brollyn read us the official announcement from Colonel Reichert, the battalion commander, and a congratulatory message from General Perkins, commander of the expeditionary force. The Gelinosa had surrendered. Mankind's first interstellar, interspecies war had ended.

No one cheered. When our company—Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 26th UNPK (United Nations Peacekeepers)—landed on Hinara, the homeworld of the Gelinosa, as part of the initial assault force, we had four officers and 108 men. With the war over just eight days after our landing, Brolly was the only officer left in the company. Thirty-one enlisted men had been killed, and another 14 had been wounded and evacuated for treatment. I didn't know about casualties in the rest of the regiment, but from what I could tell, they were heavy all over.

Few of the men even bothered to look Brolly's way. We were all too exhausted to do anything that wasn't absolutely essential to our survival. The remnants of the company were sprawled around in the grass and trees, and in the drainage ditches that flanked the main road leading into the Gelinosa town of Tebbe—a regional administrative center, as far as we could determine. We were still in defensive positions, watching the road and the forest that came down to within 10 yards of the pavement. Our last skirmish had taken place less than two hours earlier.

Brolly stood near the side of the clearing, just behind our defensive screen. He turned slowly through a circle, looking at his men. He had the face mask on his helmet up, so I could see the look of disbelief on his face. I got up off my butt by using my rifle as a

crutch. When I reached my feet, I started to walk slowly—my feet were killing me, along with everything else—across to where he was standing.

"Didn't you hear me? The war is over! We made it!"

"They heard you, Lieutenant," I said, when I was close enough for Broly to hear my horse whisper. I guided Broly off into the woods. We had two guard posts farther out. "Give 'em time for it to sink in. Most of us ain't had eight hours sleep total in eight days."

Just saying that much was an effort I could hardly sustain. I don't think I had managed anywhere near eight hours sleep since we'd been on-planet. I guess it was concern I saw in Broly's eyes when he turned to me.

"I know that, Sergeant, but we don't have time to waste." Broly was a conscientious officer, a young go-getter, and even his first taste of the hell of combat hadn't completely soured him.

"If we're due for pickup, you shoulda told 'em that, sir. That'd pick anyone up in a snap."

He was shaking his head before I had that half out. "Not pickup. We're just moving, into Tebbe."

I groaned loudly and almost flopped on my butt, just from losing concentration. I figured it out once, before Hinara even. When I joined the UNPK, Broly was 23 months old. I came that close to having more time in uniform than he has in life.

"Please tell me you're joking, sir."

"Afraid not. Get the men ready. We move in"—he checked his watch—"11 minutes."

**W**E MOVED OUT RIGHT ON THE DOT. I HADN'T WASTED the energy to ask Broly about transportation. What little transport we had on-planet was busy ferrying our wounded up to the ships or out searching for our missing. We moved into Tebbe on the same transport our ancestors would have used 10,000 generations back, feet and legs.

## *The Gelinosa had surrendered. Mankind's first interstellar, inter- species war had ended.*

I put one column on either side of the road, in the soft turf, where maybe our feet wouldn't get pounded senseless over the next six or seven miles. And where we wouldn't be all bunched together in case the Gelinosa surrender wasn't as firm as all that. I also put two scouts out in front.

Maybe the fighting was over. Maybe it wasn't. If it wasn't, I didn't want to lose men unnecessarily.

I knew how to handle unit tactics on the ground, but I was the wrong man to ask about strategy. It had taken me an entire career to work my way up to first sergeant. All I knew about the how and why of us being on Hinara came from crew bay scuttlebutt. I imagined most civilians back home had a better idea of what the war was all about than those of us who fought it. It was up to Earth to bring Hinara into the Galactic Federation. The Gelinosa were in the sector of space that Mankind was responsible for—according to the treaty that brought us into the Federation. We had advisers from the other peoples in the Federation, but the job was up to us. And when the Gelinosa persisted in their nasty habit of killing every messenger, there was no choice but to send in the troops.

Personally, I thought the whole thing was some sort of test for us. Put the humans up against a crisis and see how they react. We're still fairly new in the Federation ourselves. I was already in the PK when first contact happened. I remember how nervous we all were that first year. Would we accept membership? Or would we resist?

It was a real question. I don't suppose most folks realized that. I'm not sure if we would have been permitted to opt out. If a half dozen legislators had voted the other way on a couple of measures, we might have ended up in a position like the Gelinosa.

Or not. Who knew how they had chosen their position? All I knew about them was that they were fanatical fighters, that they never gave up, never quit.

But now they had quit?

You can see why I might be skeptical, after all the losses we had taken. I kept my men ready to fight. Just in case.

**B**Y HUMAN STANDARDS, HINARA WAS ALMOST DESERTED. In our final briefing before the assault, we were told that the total Gelinosa population was about 1.2 billion, less than 20 percent of Earth's. All that was really known about Gelinosa technology was that they had recently started to use their near space for communications and research satellites. They had started to reach off-planet. That was what had attracted the attention of the Federation, which led to our being there, in a war...or just out of it, if the news was true.

Over a period of six years, we had learned very little more about the Gelinosa, just what our ships could find out from high orbit, because the Gelinosa attacked everything that came too close. We didn't even know, in any detail, what Gelinosa looked like until we came down in the assault boats.

Then we learned. Gelinosa are bilaterally symmetrical bipeds, a little taller and heavier than humans. Two arms, two legs, six digits on hands and feet. Their eyes were higher on their faces. Instead of protuberant noses, they had simple flaps over nostrils, flaps that flared out during respiration. Their mouths were wider and hinged so that they could open to more than 80 degrees. Their skin was a deep-red oxblood color, and the skin itself looked like napped suede. Other than that suede-like nap, they were hairless.

Until we marched into Tebbe, we hadn't seen any Gelinosa civilians.

TEBBE WASN'T LIKE ANY TOWN ON EARTH I knew. The architectural styles were monotonous. The choice of colors was extremely limited. All of the buildings looked alike and were built of something that seemed like adobe but wasn't. Windows were small and round. Doors were higher than human doors, but no wider. The tallest building was only four stories high. Buildings clustered in small groups, and each group was separated from other clusters by extensive parks or gardens.

We stopped at the first clutch of buildings at the edge of Tebbe. The Gelinosa didn't post city limits signs, but when we came across buildings, we knew we had reached the town. More or less. There were no Gelinosa in evidence, but I put two squads on sentry duty while the lieutenant consulted with battalion operations.

"We're to settle in here," Broly told me when he got off the radio. "We'll occupy this group of buildings and wait. They're sending us an interpreter."

"Interpreter?" I asked. "When did we get any of those?" I wasn't trying to be a smartass, not after 20 years in the UNPK. The question was serious. One of the problems was communication. We hadn't taken any prisoners who were in any condition to talk, and the Gelinosa had refused any communications before.

"That's what I was told." Broly even managed to sound almost as skeptical as I was.

"All four buildings?" I asked.

"Check them all out. We can put a sentry post on top of that one." He pointed to the only four-story building in the group. "Other than that, we should have enough room for everyone on the lower floors."

"What about external guard posts?" I asked.

"I'll leave the details to you, Sergeant. Do what you think necessary."

**W**E FLUSHED GELINOSA FROM TWO OF THE BUILDINGS and saw our first noncombatants—women and children, I guess, though I didn't know then (and don't know now) how to tell the difference between Gelinosa sexes. They left the build-

ings as soon as we came upon them. They didn't say anything, didn't respond to our commands or questions. They were even extremely careful not to risk touching us. They left the buildings and started across the garden toward the next cluster of buildings.

"Let them go," Broly said.

"Yes, sir," I said, happy at the decision. The only way we could have stopped the Gelinosa would have been to hogtie them, or shoot them. I wasn't eager to try either of those options.

"It's going to be awhile before our interpreter gets down," Broly said. "Let the men rest and eat. Half and half, in place. And you'd better get a little rest yourself."

"Yes, sir. What about you, Lieutenant?"

His grin was amoxic. "I'm OK for now. I'll grab a bite to eat. You get some rest, then spell me."

"Aye, sir. I'll get the men squared away."

I made my rounds. It took time. A lot of the men had questions, and I didn't have answers—at least not for any of the important questions.

"Come on, Stef," Ian Powers, one of the other two sergeants left in the company, asked. Karl Dietz was the other sergeant. "You must have some idea what's up."

"We're waiting for an interpreter to come down. That's all I know."

"Where's the rest of the battalion?"

"I haven't heard. I hope they're not too far off. I'd hate to think we're all alone here."

**B**Y THE TIME I FINISHED MY ROUNDS, BROLY HAD ESTABLISHED a command post in the smallest of the four buildings, a two-story place that must have been a private residence. He had the men of headquarters platoon operating by the time I got there. We finally had re-established radio communications with battalion and regiment.

Broly was sitting on the floor next to the entrance, leaning against the wall, with a stack of empty food packs next to him. "Get your meal and catch an hour's sleep." There wasn't much in the way of furniture around, just some low tables and even lower benches. Cabinets were built in and rather sparse.

"I won't argue, sir," I hopped near him, stripped off my pack, and dug out ration packs. Even eating was a chore. But I managed. And I guess I fell asleep as soon as I set down my last empty.

When I woke, I could tell that more than an hour had passed—more like six hours. Twilight had come. I got to my feet looking around for the lieutenant. He wasn't inside, so I grabbed my rifle and stepped outside.

The first thing I saw was a command shuttle sitting on the grass, no more than 50 meters from the building. If I had slept through the noise of that thing landing, I must have been almost dead. Broly was standing near the shuttle.

"Ah, Sergeant Blessing, you feeling rested?" he called out.

"Yes, sir. You should've woken me."

"No matter, I'll sleep tonight." He sounded almost jolly. Of course, there was nothing particularly new about that. Back on Earth, some of the men in his platoon had started referring to him as Jolly Broly almost from his first week in the company.

There was a squad of Marines with the lieutenant, and two Army captains in off-dress uniform. Broly introduced the captains, Martin and Townsend. Townsend was the interpreter.

"Excuse me, Captain Townsend, I didn't know we had any Gelinosa interpreters," I said when the intros were over. The question was out of order, but I couldn't help asking it.

"Depends on your standards," Townsend said with a smile. "I figure we'll be doing well if I understand 60 percent of what they say and manage to get across half of what I try to say. We've had to rely on what we could decipher of their radio transmissions."

"Sounds pretty dicey, sir," I said.

## *We hadn't taken prisoners in any condition to talk, and the Gelinosa refused any communication...*

He nodded, as affable as possible—a staff type who'd been sleeping regularly. "But we're learning, Sergeant. The more talking we manage to do with them, the more we'll learn."

IT WAS A QUIET NIGHT SINCE THERE HAD TO BE SOMEONE UP AND IN charge, Karl, Ian, and I split the duty. Broly slept through most of the night but was up to stay by 3 in the morning. Our guests didn't reappear until dawn. By then, we had a good read on Tebbe. Between the long-range spy eyes in low orbit and the battlefield sensors we had deployed around the town, we could keep an eye—and ear—on most of the buildings in Tebbe. We could eavesdrop on the Gelinosa particularly well. They hadn't talked to us, but they did talk among themselves.

Captain Townsend started listening to recordings of Gelinosa talking among themselves even before he started eating his breakfast. It was fascinating to watch him work. He had an audio chip plugged into one ear and a radio link to one of the ships in his other ear. Between bites of food, he talked into a microphone.

If Broly hadn't called me outside, I might have stared at Townsend all morning.

"We're supposed to mount patrols," Broly told me as we walked away from the command post. "Regular patrols through Tebbe. We've got about a fourth of the town. Other companies are handling the rest. The lines are marked on the map overlays."

"With what sort of orders, sir?" I asked.

"Not to start any fights, not to provoke the Gelinosa. Of course, we can defend ourselves if we're attacked."

"How do we know what'll provoke 'em, sir?"

"We don't. All we can do is our best. Don't trample their flowers or whatever the hell they might have. Unless we get different orders, don't go into any more of their buildings."

"What do we do if any of 'em come up and try to talk to us?"

"Listen. Record. Try to keep patience. And try to keep them talking. We'll try to get Captain Townsend right on line with the patrol."

"Mind if I go along on the first walk-through? I'd like to eyeball the terrain myself."

He only hesitated a second before he nodded. "OK, Sergeant. Probably a good idea. I'll brief the other noncoms while you're out."

**W**E CARRIED OUR WEAPONS AT OUR SIDES, NOT IN A threatening posture, but where we could get them into action fast if we had to.

"Play it cool," I told the squad I had assembled. "We don't want to spook them into doing anything hostile."

I've never seen a town as thoroughly landscaped as Tebbe. The little groups of buildings were set apart the way statues or bird baths might be set in fancy gardens or parks back on Earth, constructed islands spaced around the manicured greenery. It was hard

to remember that we were in the middle of one of the larger towns on the world.

Gelinosa came out to watch us. Each time we approached another cluster of buildings, the residents came out. They stood close to the buildings, mothers keeping their children close, other individuals standing alone. They didn't say anything. They just watched until we started to move away, and then they went back inside. I

## *They took a different path than humans...when they start talking to us maybe we'll know for sure...*

couldn't even make out expressions on their faces. Blank looks, as far as I could tell.

I was trembling by the time we completed our patrol. I spent a minute briefing Ian Powers on what we had seen, and he took out the next patrol before I made my detailed report to the lieutenant.

"See anything interesting?" he asked.

I shook my head. "I don't know that I'd call it interesting, sir Spooky, more like, Eerie. I told him how the Gelinosa had behaved. 'Better that than still shooting at us.'"

"Yes, sir. No argument on that. But even scowls would've been better than those empty looks."

"Maybe those were Gelinosa scowls."

"I thought of that, but if we don't know it, it don't hardly matter."

"Captain Townsend ready to start interpreting yet, sir?" There was no sign of any of our visitors in the command post.

"Soon," Broly said. "Soon."

"SAIGE, I GOTTA QUESTION." I WAS IN THE CP, SCANNING THE MORN- ing's intelligence report from the command ship, when Corporal Leclerc came in. Marcel Leclerc was the only noncom from the 4th platoon who had made it through the fighting in one piece. He was the new leader of our operations squad.

"What sort of question?"

"What the hell do Gelinosa eat? I mean, we haven't seen any fields, or herds, or anything."

The question had never occurred to me. "I guess they make more of their food than we do. Why?"

"I didn't think they were that far advanced."

I guess we had all had thoughts like that. The Gelinosa were just starting to reach into space, and they hadn't reached a point of dense population centers yet. There was little evidence of manufacturing...but then, there's not all that much evidence of manufacturing left on Earth, just ancient factories that have been abandoned for a century or more and haven't been recycled yet.

"They took a different path than humans, I guess," I said. "They must have gotten to manufacturing faster than we did. When they start talking to us, or when we can read their histories, maybe we'll know for sure."

"Just doesn't seem right."

**I**T STARTED RAINING. THIS RAIN WAS SOFT AND SLOW, BUT still nothing an infantryman could like. Even in waterproof battledress and helmets with full facemasks, rain isn't pleasant for a foot soldier. We had experienced three days of continuous raining during the fighting. And, of course, rain means mud. Mud and combat seem to go together like bacon and eggs.

I fixed myself a meal and ate standing by a window. The two staff officers and their squad of Marines came out of the shuttle while I was watching the weather. The fact that the shuttle

was still sitting out there was significant. We were so hard-pressed for ground-to-orbit transport that leaving the shuttle on the ground, out of service, for that many hours was incredible. All of the shuttles had been in operation almost constantly, even since the end of the fighting. Maybe all of our wounded had finally been taken up to hospital wards in the fleet, but still...the general must have been planning a lot of hope on Townsend's mission, whatever it really was.

**C**APTAIN TOWNSEND CAME TO THE CP with Captain Martin and the Marines. The falling rain didn't seem to bother Townsend at all, even though he was in off-dress khakis and not in battledress. He even seemed to relish the chill rain on his face.

"Ah, Sergeant Blessing." Only the Marine sergeant and Captain Martin came inside with Townsend.

"Yes, sir?"

"Do you know where I can find Lieutenant Brolly?"

"Over in the four-story building, sir. I'll get him for you."

"Never mind. I'll go over there."

Mike Koller, our company clerk, came over to me after our visitors left.

"Wonder if Captain Townsend even gets to go to the latrine alone," Mike said in his soft almost-whisper. Most of the men call Mike "Professor." He graduated from college before he enlisted in the PK, and he had turned down officers' school—twice, that I knew of.

"If he's got the smarts to pick up a new language in just a few days, without cooperation, then he needs to be protected like the crown jewels."

"Or family jewels?" Mike asked before he went back to his console.

I dumped my empty food cartons. I was still hungry, but I didn't bother opening another breakfast pack. I had a feeling that Broly would be calling for me very soon after Captain Townsend got to him.

It took five minutes. Broly got me on our private frequency.

"Where are our patrols right now?" he asked.

I moved to the intelligence center and checked, then gave him the coordinates. "Powers's squad should be back here in 15 minutes. Wysocki's squad just left, not quite 30 minutes ago."

"Pull them both in. Have them head straight back here."

"Yes, sir. Anything else?"

"Not right now. I'm on my way back to the CP."

I got on the noncoms' frequency and ordered both patrols in. When Broly arrived, he had the two Captains and the Marine sergeant with him. The rest of the Marines waited out in the rain.

"Captain Townsend is going to make his first contact with the Gelinosa," Broly said. "He doesn't want our patrols in the way."

"Yes, sir. What about the rest of the battalion?"

"They're being pulled now," Townsend said.

"Yes, sir. I take it we're to hold off on patrols until you're finished?"

"Until you get further orders," Townsend said. "This could be touchy, Sergeant. I don't want to jeopardize my mission by having too many soldiers in evidence."

There was strain visible in his face, but he managed a fair grin. "It's all guesswork, Sergeant. We've never faced a situation like this before."

Broly was watching Townsend, not me. The lieutenant had his super-serious face on, swallowing every word the captain said as Absolute Gospel.

"What action do we take if you get into trouble, Captain?" Broly asked.

Townsend's cheeks puffed up for an instant before he expelled a

noisy breath. "You're to take no action at all without a direct request from us or orders from General Perkins, no matter what happens."

Brolly swallowed before he said, "Yes, sir."

HEADQUARTERS PLATOON HADN'T BEEN TOTALLY SPARED DURING the eight days of combat. There are no offices to hide in when you're in the kind of combat we had faced. But HQ platoon had lost fewer men than any of our line companies. The 3rd squad, operations, had been wiped out—seven killed and the other three wounded—but other than that, HQ platoon's casualties had been minimal. We had put together a new ops squad in the reorganization, but those men were too new in their jobs to be very confident that they knew what they were supposed to be doing. That meant I had to give them a lot of attention.

**A**FTER CAPTAIN TOWNSEND AND HIS SHADOWS LEFT, I started our ops people working on rescue scenarios. No matter what had been said about taking no action without specific orders, we had to be ready if those orders did come. "What if" planning is a major part of the work for ops, and it's the part that comes the hardest for new people. It takes a different kind of thinking than shooting a rifle. Helping Leclerc set up the parameters for the new computer scenarios kept me busy for 20 minutes.

I was glad for the distraction. It meant that I didn't have quite as much time to get nervous about Townsend's mission. If General Perkins thought it was important, I had to think that maybe it was even more than important, maybe even vital. No one had managed to establish any sort of communications with the Gelinosa yet. And, when you get right down to it, the entire war had been fought just to establish communications with them.

The fighting was over, but would it stay over? I was still having trouble accepting the fact that the Gelinosa had quit fighting so suddenly. Militarily, they were generations behind us. If they hadn't outnumbered us so heavily, they wouldn't have been able to stand up to our weapons and tactics.

But they had stood up to us. We needed six days to turn the tide against them, to begin to really believe that maybe we could actually win the fight. The Gelinosa were too dispersed—not just their army, their entire society—for us to knock them out from the air, even if we had come with more air power than we had.

All their disadvantages hadn't stopped them from fighting. I don't think any of us, all the way up to General Perkins, had any real idea why they finally had stopped.

"Lieutenant?"

"What?" Broly turned away from the spy consoles he had been watching.

"How did the Gelinosa surrender? How did they tell us that they were done fighting?"

Broly looked startled by my questions.

"I mean, I thought they hadn't said anything to us," I said. "And they wouldn't know to wave a white flag or anything like that."

Broly stared at me for a moment, then shook his head. "I don't have the faintest idea, Stefan." The lieutenant almost never called me by my first name. We had never worked together that closely before Captain Zimmer got killed and Broly inherited the company.

"It just occurred to me, sir," I said. Maybe I should have thought of it sooner, but after eight days of almost constant fighting, it takes time for a brain to start working normally again.

"Damn good question." Broly turned to Mike Kotler. "Get me Colonel Reichert." Broly didn't have his combat helmet close, so he needed to go through the communications console.

I didn't hear the conversation. Broly turned away from me and used a subvocal microphone and a headset. But he wasn't on the

line very long.

"You're not the first to come up with the question," he said after he finished. "Those Gelinosa units that were in contact with our forces simply dropped their weapons and disengaged, when they could. The other forces just went home. There was some sort of message broadcast, but not until after all combat activities had ceased."

"Was the message in English or in the Gelinosa's language?"

"The colonel didn't say. Their language, I'd guess. Must have been something we could decipher already, though."

**W**E COULD TRACK THE MOVEMENTS OF CAPTAIN Townsend and his companions, which appeared as blips on the screen, but we didn't have audio or video feed from them. The AV was being piped straight up to expedition headquarters in orbit, and our gear was locked out of the circuit. I stood next to Broly and we both watched the intelligence squad's consoles.

The buildings that Townsend went to were the first I had checked on my patrol. My memories could fill in the details that blips on a map overlay couldn't show.

Townsend and his people went into one of the buildings and stayed 30 minutes. At the next building, only two of the blips went inside.

Mike brought coffee for the lieutenant and me. I drank mine, but

*When you get right down to it, the war had been fought to establish communication with them.*

I was scarcely aware of it. I was too intent on the screen, wondering what was going on.

The two blips stayed in the second building less than 20 minutes. When they came out, they merged with the blips that had stayed outside. For better than 10 minutes, the blips just stayed there without moving.

Then they all marched off, away from that cluster of buildings.

"The next group is 15 minutes off," I said, blinking and looking away from the display for the first time in what seemed like hours.

"I wonder if they're getting anywhere," Mike said. "I wish we had AV from them."

"Maybe they've been directed on to local headquarters," I suggested.

Broly's "maybe" didn't sound very optimistic. "You'd better do a quick inspection of our perimeter, Sergeant. Make sure no one's flaking off."

"Yes, sir." Do me good to get out for a bit, I told myself. I should have thought of making the tour myself. That's part of my job, to make sure the company commander doesn't have to think of every little detail.

The rain had eased off to little more than a sprinkle. I made the rounds of the other buildings we had occupied and our perimeter positions. Everyone had questions. I didn't have the right answers.

"Just keep your eyes open," I told one squad. "We don't know what the hell's going on. Until we're aboard ship and heading home, figure anything can happen."

Anything.

CAPTAIN TOWNSEND AND HIS COMPANIONS STAYED OUT UNTIL nearly sunset. We tracked them from one cluster of buildings to the next. They couldn't get to a tenth of Tebbe in one afternoon, but they kept at it as long as they had light.

When they came back, they didn't come into the CP. The two captains went into the shuttle. The pilot and copilot came out. They had been staying pretty much inside the shuttle since they landed. The Marines lined up outside it, guarding both hatches.

"Must be reporting directly to General Peridins," Broly said softly. 10 minutes after the pilots came out to stand in the rain. He didn't sound as disappointed as I felt at not being able to eavesdrop on that conversation.

"At least they must have something to report," I said. "They've spent a lot of time in there."

"I'm sure we'll find out, in time," Broly said.

"They come in here, you going to ask?"

"Anything we need to know, I'm sure someone will tell us."

"Yes, sir." There was no point to continuing the discussion. Broly obviously was in no mood for it. He was as frustrated as I was, and his frustration outranked mine. I found other work to keep me busy for the next few minutes.

Then Captain Martin came into the CP, alone.

"We'll be staying in the shuttle tonight, Lieutenant," Martin said. "You're not to mount any patrols. We'll see about tomorrow in the morning."

"Yes, sir," Broly replied. He looked as if he wanted to ask something more, but Captain Martin didn't give him a chance. He just spun on his heel and left the building.

Broly came to me. "I want all of the noncoms in here, Sergeant."

**I**T TOOK 10 MINUTES TO COLLECT ALL OF THE SERGEANTS AND corporals. Several of them gave me questioning looks when they came in, but with the lieutenant standing right there, they couldn't come out and ask their questions. And when Broly started talking, it was obvious that he was still in a foul mood, though he kept it under control—better than a lot of the officers I've served under would have.

## *All I knew about the them was that they were fanatical, that they never gave up, never quite.*

"Right off the bat I'll tell you that I don't know any more than you do about what happened this afternoon. That's to stop the rumors and questions. If we do learn anything official, I'll make sure the word gets to you as soon as possible. We won't be running any patrols until further notice, but I want a lot of care on perimeter security tonight. We don't know what to expect, so expect the worst. Keep your men alert when they're on watch. Apart from that, make sure they get as much rest as possible, and run an extra meal or two during the night. We're all still behind on sleep and calories. Now, get back to your men."

No one asked questions, though I got a lot more looks while the noncoms were filing out. The most I could do was shrug while the lieutenant was looking the other way. When we were down to just the regular headquarters crew in the CP, Broly appeared to relax. He let out his breath and even seemed to slump, just a little.

"Get your duty schedule set for the night," he said, his voice less tense than before. "We need to keep the consoles monitored straight through in here, but other than that, let everyone in the platoon get as much sleep as they can." Our people wouldn't pull guard duty on the perimeter, not now that we were more or less "in garrison."

"Be good to let the men take turns at the plumbing upstairs too, sir." I'd spent a lot of time looking over the situation. There was

even hot water in the bathrooms, and while the Gelinosa apparently didn't use showers, they had extremely large bathtubs.

"I was thinking that myself," Broly said with a weak smile. "I'm going up to give it a try now."

I GOT UP EVERY TWO HOURS ALL NIGHT, AT EACH WATCH CHANGE. When I got up, I'd spend a few minutes checking the perimeter posts by radio, then scan the data that had come in over the intelligence consoles in the previous two hours. The interruptions didn't detract much from my sleep. After all my years in uniform, I could get back to sleep in seconds.

The Marines stayed out in the shuttle with the two captains and the shuttle's crew. The Marines stood their own guard, at the shuttle hatches.

The night was almost 13 Earth hours long. It was a good night, for us.

There haven't been many of those since.

**I** WAS SITTING ON A LOW GELINOSA TABLE EATING BREAKFAST when Captain Townsend came into the CP alone. It was the first time I had seen him without any of his shadows. Broly hadn't come downstairs yet. Mike Koller was at his console already, putting together the daily manning report. Two men from 2nd squad were at the intelligence consoles. I had just sent the one man from 3rd squad who was on duty upstairs to rouse the rest of the platoon, and I had revivified the other platoons by radio.

"Morning, Captain." I set my breakfast pack aside and stood.

"Go ahead and finish your meal, Sergeant. Your C.O. up yet?"

"I expect him any minute, sir. Should I give him a call?"

"Don't bother. There's no particular rush. Go on, finish your meal."

He sounded depressed. I made the easy guess that he hadn't managed to get anywhere with his palavering the day before. I was trying to work myself up to asking when he beat me to the punch.

"I've got to try something new this morning. I think maybe having those Marines along was the wrong approach. They looked like parade-ground soldiers with their clean uniforms and all. Maybe that was the problem."

"Sir?"

"We were all outsiders. The Gelinosa must have recognized that we weren't the ones who fought them to a standstill."

"You didn't get as much done as you'd hoped?"

His laugh was as sour as any I've ever heard.

"Not one word, Sergeant. I talked to more than 60 Gelinosa, and I didn't get one word from any of them. They simply refused to talk. Not so much as a single, 'Go to hell.'"

"Nothing at all, sir?" That was incredible, what with the captain speaking their lingo and all.

"Nothing at all. They wouldn't speak to me. They wouldn't even speak to each other in my presence."

"You're going to want some of us with you this morning, sir?"

He nodded. Then he noticed that I hadn't gone back to my eating and told me to finish my breakfast again. He walked over to the door and stood there looking out.

I sat down and finished eating. My food had cooled, but I scarcely noticed.

WHEN LIEUTENANT BROLYN CAME DOWN, TOWNSEND TOLD HIM what he wanted, a squad from our company to accompany him on his rounds. And he asked for me to lead the squad. At the time, I was rather happy about that. I wanted to see Townsend in action. I wanted to see how the Gelinosa reacted.

But Captain Townsend was really in no hurry. He left the choice of men to me. I took three men from our intelligence section and



added a rifle squad from first platoon. Townsend spent 10 minutes telling us just what he wanted from us. The sun had been up for two hours before we finally started away from the CP.

**T**HE RAIN HAD ENDED WELL BEFORE DAWN, AND THE SKY had cleared, but the grass was still quite wet when we headed across one of the park areas toward the next cluster of buildings. No Gelinosa came out as we approached.

We stopped in the center of that first group of buildings. Captain Townsend waited for a couple of minutes to see if anyone would come out. When they didn't, he pointed at the tallest of the buildings and we went in. The door wasn't locked. Come to think of it, there were no recognizable locks on any of the Gelinosa doors I remember.

Captain Townsend and I went inside first. Half the squad, including the three men from the intelligence section, followed us in. The rest remained outside, but near the building's only door.

"There were always Gelinosa to meet us," Townsend said when we saw the empty room just inside the doorway. "They didn't speak, but they were always right here."

"Maybe they're late sleepers," I suggested, though it sounded ludicrous.

Townsend was shaking his head as he moved through to the hallway. We were going to have to look for Gelinosa before we could talk to them.

I never had a clue what we were going to find.

We moved slowly from room to room, methodically. It wasn't as if it took more than a single look to tell that a room was empty, but Captain Townsend paused in each doorway. I had to consciously force myself to leave my rifle down at my side. The impulse was to check to make sure that I had a round in the chamber and the safety off. But we weren't on a combat patrol. We didn't want shooting.

First floor: Second floor: Nothing.

WE FOUND THEM ALL IN ONE ROOM ON THE TOP FLOOR, THE THIRD floor. Nine Gelinosa, clustered together. All dead.

Captain Townsend said, "Shit."

I tried to swallow a lump in my throat, then moved to check the bodies. I looked but didn't touch. I didn't have to. It was fairly clear that all nine of those Gelinosa had committed suicide: knife to the throat. It looked as if even the four children in the group had managed to do it for themselves, without help.

"Shit," Townsend said again.

We stood there, looking at the bodies. After a moment, Lev Archer went over and put his hand against the face of one of the dead Gelinosa.

"Stone cold," he announced. He tried moving a Gelinosa's arm. It was rigid. "I don't know about rigor mortis with 'em, but this turkey's stiffer'n a board."

Lev examined two more bodies before Captain Townsend told him to forget it.

"Let's try the other buildings here," Townsend said. His voice sounded almost strangled. It was as if he knew what we were going to find.

Well, I more than half expected it myself.

THERE WERE FOUR BUILDINGS IN THAT CLUSTER. WE WENT through them all. Four buildings, 47 dead Gelinosa.

Captain Townsend spent 10 minutes on a radio link to General Perkins. When the conversation was over, we headed toward the next cluster of buildings. Other squads around the perimeter of Tebbe were going to move in to the nearest buildings on their own.

There's little point in detailing what we found, building by building. And how could I possibly convey the growing feeling of horror that built up through the morning? Unless you were there, you'll never understand just how it felt.

Before long, it took every ounce of discipline I possessed just to step into another Gelinosa building, knowing that I was going to find nothing but dead bodies. Tebbe was dead. Totally. We didn't find one single live Gelinosa anywhere in the town.

Or anywhere else on Hinara.

## *We found them all in one room on the top floor....Nine Gelinosa, clustered together. All dead.*

Oh, they hadn't all killed themselves that one night, but there just weren't enough people in our expeditionary force to get to every town and village at the same time. And whenever our shuttle brought troops into a new area, there were only bodies to greet us. Sometimes the Gelinosa were rushed. Some of our patrols found warm bodies.

But only bodies. The Gelinosa ceased to exist. An entire species killed itself rather than talk to us. I don't know. Maybe they could stand it that there were other intelligent beings in their universe as long as there was a language barrier. Maybe that barrier let them deny our intelligence...or something. But then Captain Townsend started talking to them in their own tongue. And the next morning we started finding bodies.

**W**E HAD TO COUNT THEM ALL. And we had to bury or burn all of those bodies adults and children. Mass graves and massive funeral pyres. Stench and smoke.

Other teams went through the towns looking for data, records, histories. Suicide notes.

And then we left. As quickly as the remnants of a regiment could be moved back up to the ships, we were moved away from the world of the Gelinosa.

But not fast enough or far enough. Hinara changed us, those who were there. And we're carrying a contagion home with us.

There were seven suicides among troops of the expeditionary force before General Perkins pulled all of us off the planet. Our guns went back into the armories as soon as we were aboard ship, and the keys to the armories went in the general's safe.

WE TURNED BACK TOWARD EARTH, AND THE SIX-WEEK VOYAGE home.

The nightmares came along for the ride. The suicides continued. Captain Townsend was found dead in his cabin this morning.

We're still two days away from Earth.

There are other translators in the fleet. They're all working with the scant stores of documents we retrieved on Hinara, trying to make some sense of what the Gelinosa did, trying to understand them.

It's important. Those men and women are the focus of everyone in the fleet. We wait. Those of us with religious inclinations pray. We're hoping they'll find a way to clear us of the charge of genocide, something we can point to so we can say, "It wasn't our fault."

People are going to look at us.

I almost dread landing on Earth. This uniform I've worn—proudly—for the last 20 years is going to be the mark of Cain now.

And there's the other question. What happens the next time we meet a new species on a new world? ☐



When Earth's dictator learned that he was dying,  
he swore that a cure would be found by any means necessary,  
even if that meant shattering time itself.

# The Fifteenth Station of the Cross

BY CHARLES SHEFFIELD

*Illustration by Doug Anderson*

**T**he Ruler of the Earth should not look like this. Weak, emaciated, yellow-faced, lolling in a wheelchair. Puladi was aware of the contradiction. Eight billion people under his absolute control; and one body which refused to do the bidding of its owner's fierce will.

Puladi's internal defenses were crumbling, at the same time as his external ones became more and more impregnable. He sat in a room whose outer structure justified every superlative: 400 feet by 400, with a ceiling 50 feet high and a floor that shone glassy, empty, and impervious. The walls were plain, polished steel. Recessed fluorescents in the high ceiling illuminated every square inch with a harsh and uniform light.

At the room's exact center stood the metal box of the inner chamber; not small—it was 40 feet across and 10 high—but dwarfed by its surroundings. Anyone who entered the outer room must cross an unprotected 60 yards of featureless bare floor to the single and sealed inner entrance, controlled from within.

Puladi was frowning, in thought more than in anger. He watched through concealed cameras as a white-coated woman and a tall, gray-garbed man crossed the expanse of the outer chamber and approached the inner door. Near their destination, they slowed. There was a muttered conversation between them, easily picked up by sensitive wall microphones. At last the man stepped reluctantly forward and rapped on the metal panel.

Puladi touched a button, one of scores that sat in the armrests of his padded chair. The views of the outer room vanished from the bank of screens on the wall in front of him. The door slid open.

The tall man entered, stooping and blinking as his eyes began to adjust from the outside glare to a dim-lit interior. He caught a glimpse of the rear of the room, with its bed and medical station, its food and disposal system. Then his eyes were drawn to the slight figure before him, sitting in the wheeled chair and propped on a pile of soft cushions and water pillows.

"Dr. Salino, is it not?" Puladi's voice was weak, but full of a chilly authority. "I assume that you have the results."

"Yes, Excellency."

"No title. I do not use one. I am Puladi. The tests—what do they show?" And, when Salino shook his head but did not speak, "Sit down. I command it. And talk."

The tall man did not so much sit, as collapse back into a hard chair half a dozen feet from Puladi's own. He raised his hands to his face, and they were trembling. "Excellency—Puladi. There is bad news. The worst news. It is spreading. Again."

"I suspected as much. How long?"

The tall man shook his head again, but said nothing.

"Ernesto Salino. Look at me." Puladi's eyes were brown and glowing. It was said that no one could encounter those dark orbs without feeling fear. Salino looked, and at last Puladi nodded.

"Good. I asked a question: How long do I have? And before you answer, let me inform you of one thing. You have heard, I am sure, that people are afraid to give me bad news. It is true that I do not welcome it. Who does? But the fate of one who gives me such news is nothing, compared to the fate of any man or woman who lies to me. So speak—and be assured that there will be no third asking of my question."

"You have about one month. Three at most," Salino's voice was faint and husky. "That is of course with regular transfusions, with everything that we know how to do."

"What about the research program?"

"I reviewed it this morning. Too slow, even with every resource poured into it. I think that in 15 years, perhaps even in 10, there will be a successful treatment and cure. Horst Calvin believes that he is making real progress. But today—"

"Today, I have a month. Can you guarantee that?"

"No. Nor can any human. But it is our best estimate."

"Our estimate?"

"Mine. And Dr. Vissarion's."

"Who is, I assume, waiting outside to hear the result of this meeting. As your superior, did she order you to come in and tell me about the results and unfavorable prognosis, rather than doing it herself?"

"Sir—"

"Did she?"

"Yes, Puladi. She commanded it."

"Very good. You are learning to tell the truth." Puladi lifted his gaze away from the tall doctor, and seemed to speak into the air above his chair. "Ekaterina Vissarion should have come in herself. That means she has not been doing her duty. I do not wish to see her again."

"Oh! P—P—"

"Not you, Salino," Puladi's piercing eyes returned to the other man. "The guards will not remove you. In fact, I will be seeing you frequently. You have just become my senior physician. Administrator

Kelb will provide you with a complete briefing on your duties, later today." He held out a wasted right arm. "Meanwhile, you will complete my treatment. And you will also return here at this time tomorrow. You must keep up my strength, because I have much work to do." As Salino stood up and nervously gripped the proffered arm, Puladi continued in a musing tone: "Fifteen years, you say. Fifteen years from now, Dr. Salino, do you really think there will be a cure?" Salino nodded. "Yes, Puladi."

"Thank you. That is most interesting. Continue."

As the perfusion IV attached itself to his right arm, Puladi's left hand began to dance across the keys in the arm of the chair. Data bank linkages flickered on the 40 screens that covered the wall in front of him. He seemed to be seeking something very specific. Directories with the titles "BREAKTHROUGH AREAS," "PRIORITIES," "CHRONIC ANOMALIES," "TEMPORAL RESEARCH," and "FUNDING STATUS" flashed into existence on five screens. As the cursors moved through them, other screens provided real-time images from half a dozen research laboratories. Puladi merged six files. A new directory, "CHRONOCLASTIC FLOW" suddenly popped up on all screens simultaneously. Puladi grinned. He became fully absorbed in reviewing its sub-directories.

Ernesto Salino breathed a prayer of thanks as he bent to his task. At last, with those eyes off him and Puladi focused elsewhere, he had some hope of performing competent medical work.

**T**welve hours later, Rustum Belur sat facing Puladi. He was weary, nervous, and utterly bewildered. He had left the Calcutta lab tired after a long day's work, eaten a light dinner, and gone straight to bed. Two hours later he had been roused, forced to dress, and flown on a high-speed personal transport halfway around the world. Now he was meeting a man he had never in his life expected to encounter—the elusive figure who ran the world.

And that man seemed to be dying. Puladi was terribly thin, jaundiced in complexion, and apparently too weak to move from his chair.

"Help you?" Belur said again. "Excellency—"

"Puladi," whispered the man standing behind him. It was Administrator Kelb, the burly, lion-faced man who had brought him into the room. "Puladi must be called only Puladi."

"Puladi, there must be some mistake. I cannot help you. I am not a physician—I am a physicist."

"I know what you are." Puladi seemed almost too frail to talk. "You are Professor Belur, of the Calcutta Institute for Advanced Studies. You are the originator of the theory of chronoclastic flows. You are also, according to the research data banks, the creator of a machine that can develop and exploit such flows. True, or false?"

"True. It is called the Chronoclast. But the machine—"

"Is now being brought here, from your laboratory. You have used it to transport objects, living and non-living, through time. True, or false?"

"True. Small objects and small creatures."

"But that is not, as I understand it, a basic limitation?"

"No. It is a function of available energy supply, and the chronoclastic rigidity coefficients—which determine how difficult it is to fracture time, locally. Puladi, I do not understand—"

"You will. When the Chronoclast arrives, you will give me a demonstration. Meanwhile, tell me this. Would it be possible to carry an individual, together possibly with a piece of medical equipment, through time; for, let us say, 15 years?"

"A human being? Sir, we have never attempted anything so big. The risk, to that person—"

"Answer my question, if you please." Puladi's eyes seemed to glow with light and draw Belur into them.

The professor sank back in the chair. "A human, across fifteen years? We have never carried anything for more than two years—

and nothing bigger than a few grams. The energy goes as the cube of the mass, and it is quadratic in the transport time. It might deplete the local chronic supply. And it would need huge power."

"Assume that the whole of the world's energy is available to you."

"Then it can probably be done." Belur was silent for a few seconds, and when he spoke again his voice was stronger. "I will be more definite. It can be done. There is only one possible complication. The chronoclastic viewer allows us to look to an exact moment of time, but in the time-transport process itself there is a slight uncertainty. You might find that you aim to carry something across two years exactly, but the Chronoclast will bring it from two years plus or minus a few hours."

"That is no problem. I have one other question. Can you identify a specific individual?"

"Certainly, if you know what he or she looks like, and you can tell me where to look, and when to look. That is the whole purpose of the chronoclastic viewer—to see and specify just what is to be transported."

"So now I can answer your question, by telling you exactly how you must help me. Once we have provided an adequate energy supply for your equipment, I will give you sufficient information for you to identify an individual—almost certainly, it will be a physician, Dr. Horst Calvia. I will also give you the precise coordinates of his laboratory office. You will then operate your Chronoclast to bring him here, from a time fifteen years in the future, together with any necessary medical—"

"The future." Rustum Belur jerked upright.

"Correct. I assume that the Chronoclast operates as easily on the past as the future?"

"No! Bringing something from the future is impossible. The future is—" Belur waved his arms in the empty air around him, "—the future is not real. It represents only potentialities, endless new possible branches every second. Only the past is real. Only the past is accessible to the Chronoclast. My reports make all that very clear. You don't know what you are talking about, if you suggest that something might be brought from the future."

Kelb, standing behind Rustum Belur, growled and grabbed the professor by the shoulders. "Puladi, I'll get him right out of here. The guards will take care of him."

"Not yet. Not quite yet. Belur, are you sure that your reports clearly indicated that the Chronoclast has access only to the past?"

"I swear it. On my life."

"On your life it will be. But I have been a careless reader. Or perhaps I have been guilty of wishful thinking. Leave him alone, Kelb. And sit down, Belur. When the equipment arrives, I still want to see that demonstration."

He lifted his arm, and stared at its veined skin and prominent bones. "And now I need time to think. Perhaps I will still want to use the Chronoclast. When high-probability options vanish, it is time to consider long shots."

**T**he prototype Chronoclast, fully assembled, had proved too big for the inner chamber. But Puladi would not allow it to be moved far away. It had been put together in the outer room, and sat as a dull jumble of gray and green that sprawled across 50 feet of floor. The transport chamber stood at its edge, a horizontal cylinder 10 feet long and 6 feet high. Thick cables snaked to it from an augmented power supply.

Puladi, reclining in his wheeled chair, stared impatiently at the swirling, misted surface of the cylinder.

"How much longer?"

"I do not know." Rustum Belur sounded subdued and nervous. In the four days since his arrival he had learned that Puladi's assis-

tants might be valued, but that did not mean they were not expendable. Two men had bungled the arrangements for delivery of the Chronoclast. They had sought to conceal the fact; and they had disappeared.

*I do not wish to see him again,* spoken by Puladi to the apparently empty air, and the named individual was seen no more.

Belur remembered Salino's advice: "Tell the truth. You may get away with one or two pieces of bad news; but a lie, never. And you should speak only when Puladi demands it."

"The flows must stabilize before the cocoon can be safely opened," Belur went on. "With small objects and short transport times, that takes only a few seconds. But with something this size, and over so long a period—it could be hours, or even days."

"Then wait here. Both of you. I have work to do," Puladi touched the key pad on the chair's arm, and it swiveled to carry him back to the inner chamber.

"Me, too, Puladi?" Salino, in his surprise, broke one of his own rules.

"Naturally. When it is safe to open the cocoon, you will both enter. You, Belur, will confirm the identification. And you, Salino, will perform a brain scan and check on the medical parameters. I do not expect that we will introduce to our time some source of old disease, but I want to be sure of that before I am exposed. Inform me when your work is complete, and I will return."

The gray cylinder remained misted for five hours. When the cloudy swirls dwindled and the surface cleared, Rustum Belur broke the seals with hands almost too nervous to function. He led the way in. Ernesto Salino followed, fingering his diagnostic palette like the beads of a rosary.

When they came out, three hours later, Belur was so close to collapse that he had to support himself on Salino's shoulder.

"I am a dead man," he said, over and over. "I am a dead man. A dead man. What can I do?"

"Tell the truth. You can do nothing else," Salino was worried about guilt by association. He believed that Belur was doomed, but for himself there was a faint gleam of hope. "Come on, let's get it over with."

Puladi's calm, when he rolled his wheeled chair forward to peer inside the cylinder of the Chronoclast, was as terrifying as any rage. He took a long, thoughtful look at the brown-skinned unconscious figure lying naked within, and turned to Rustum Belur.

"You told me that you were absolutely sure of the identification."

"I thought that I was," Belur had passed beyond fear to resignation. "I checked scores of times. I fixed the right place, the right background. I could not have made a mistake."

"And yet you bring me this," Puladi waved a dismissive hand. "Not a man, but a child. Not the hope of a miracle cure, but a fiasco."

"Puladi, I cannot explain it. In all my experiments with the Chronoclast, nothing like this has ever happened before. All I can suggest is that some new phenomenon presents itself when the transport time is very large. We went so far back—more than two thousand years—we were beyond all earlier experience."

"Do not babble. Are you quite sure that this is the wrong man—that you did not go back too far, and pick up the right person at the wrong time? Salino?"

"No, Puladi. The body is only five years old. By that time, the man you wanted had already set his spiritual path. But this one's brain scan is that of a young man with only the most mundane desires. His interests are girls, wine, and pleasure."

"All of which are quite useless to me. You have failed, Belur."

Administrator Kelb had appeared from the inner chamber, and Puladi turned to him and pointed at the cylinder of the Chronoclast.

"Kelb, get rid of that lump of flesh in there. It is of no value."

"Yes, Puladi. And for the rest..." Kelb stared accusingly at Rustum Belur and Ernesto Salino.

"The youth may not be useless," Salino spoke rapidly, and wondered if he was being a fool as he did so. When Puladi was angry, no one should draw attention to himself. But now he had gone too far to pull back. As Puladi glared, he went on, "Just as you ordered, I checked his medical parameters. He is healthy, and he will recover consciousness in the next half-hour—"

"He will be gone long before that," Kelb said softly. "I have orders."

"—but the important thing is his blood," Salino blundered on. "It is the same rare group as your own, Puladi, and it matches you far more closely at every physiological and chemical level than anything that we have available in the banks. If we used him—in direct coupling, vein to vein and with a very slow transfer rate—it would be much better than what I have been able to do."

It seemed at first as though Puladi had not been listening. He was eyeing Rustum Belur. "And you, professor. If you failed to bring me what I needed, is there a future here for you? I think not." He stared up to the ceiling, while Rustum Belur wailed in hopeless fear.

And Puladi smiled, a skeletal show of teeth in the jaundiced face. "No future here. So you can return to Calcutta, professor. Go to your institute, and tell them all of Puladi's mercy. You failed me, but who knows? Perhaps I will find some future use for you, and for the Chronoclast."

Kelb groaned in surprise, while Belur gasped and fell to his knees. Puladi ignored both of them. He swiveled his chair to face Ernesto Salino. "You talk of blood transfer at a very slow rate. Hours?"

"Many hours. It is best done overnight."

"Very good. We will begin tomorrow," Puladi touched his armrest keypad, and the wheeled chair started for the inner chamber. "But I have no desire to converse with him," he said over his shoulder, "even if that were possible. Before you bring him to me, sedate him; and keep him sedated as long as he is with me."

At three in the morning, Puladi was wide awake. That was not unusual. Easy sleep was a rare prize, denied him since his youth. What was unusual was the feeling of uneasiness that possessed his mind, as he wandered around the world and checked its status through his remote mobile monitors.

The miniature cameras returned sounds and images from a thousand places, logical and illogical sites for possible dissent or insurrection: homes and bars and hotels and restaurants, freezing log cabins and tall tents and stifling squat mud huts, churches and chapels and synagogues, hospitals and prisons and asylums and refuge shelters, on and under land and sea, in the air and out in the vacuum of space.

Puladi performed this surveillance nightly, rarely visiting the same place twice, always alert for the tiny anomalies that spoke to him—and only to him—of civil unrest.

Everywhere was calm. Nowhere could he find anything unusual. Out of habit, he culled a couple of hundred troublesome cases, giving oral instructions to the guards as to who should be taken and where they could be found. Two hundred was nothing, compared with any night during a time of major purge. Yet his jaundiced skin still prickled with a sense of trouble. He checked the temperature of the room. It was exactly as usual; still the sweat ran down his neck, and was clammy on his face and hands. He could find no easy position on the piled cushions and pillows.

Maybe it was the effect of the change in medical treatment. Or maybe it was the simple presence of another person, even an unconscious one, in his sleeping quarters.

Puladi glanced at his own arm, following the narrow tube of the perfusion IV across to the bed mounted next to his wheeled chair. The other end of the IV was attached to a slim brown arm. The metered flow was invisible, but every second a drop of new blood was pumped across to enter Puladi's body.

He activated a ceiling light, and shone it on the face of the youth. The boy's nose was sharp, his lips thin. They were parted to show a gleam of white teeth. The eyelids flickered, even as Puladi watched, and there was the faint murmur of an exhalation through the open mouth.

The stimulus, surely, of the brighter light. The youth was soundly sedated, and he had not moved since the bed was wheeled in. But the face showed a peace that Puladi envied.

He dimmed the overhead light, turned off the bank of displays that covered the wall, and watched the sleeping face. When had he known such tranquillity, such contentment? He could not remember a time, ever. He gazed, and brooded on the distant past. Finally, without knowing it, he fell asleep.

**H**e was still sleeping, to Salino's amazement, when the doctor checked the telemetry signals from Puladi's body at 8 the next morning.

Puladi never slept so late! Terrified, Salino reviewed all the monitored outputs.

They were fine—better than fine, almost unbelievable. Puladi had been losing weight steadily, 50 grams a day, for months, while his ion balances oscillated randomly and his liver chemistry moved farther and farther away from acceptable levels. Today he was 100 grams heavier, and all his functions showed a slight but definite improvement.

It was the new blood, it had to be, so close in its properties to Puladi's own. The temptation to wake the ruler, to tell him the good news at once, was strong, but Salino knew better. Sleep, easy natural sleep, was better for Puladi than any medication.

The physician waited impatiently by the telemetry unit, until there were clear signs from Puladi's breathing and eye movement patterns that the ruler was waking. At that point he hurried to the inner chamber and rapped on the metal panel. It slid open. As he went in he said, "Puladi, I have good news—"

"You do not need to say it," Puladi smiled, close to laughing aloud. "I feel it. For the first time in years, I am hungry. What can I eat?"

"Anything that you like—in small amounts. Your stomach is not used to real meals," Salino was busy, unhooking the I/V and checking the sleeping body on the bed. He glanced at the in situ monitors, and nodded his approval.

"He is all right?" Puladi asked. His smile had vanished, and he showed a hint of anxiety.

"He is fine—young, and strong, and healthy. You took only half a liter of his blood, in ten hours. It will be safe to repeat that, three days from now."

"When will he awaken?"

"As soon as I provide the appropriate stimulant," Salino was preparing to wheel the bed out of the chamber. "I assume that you are willing to allow him to be awake, when he is not with you?"

"More than that," Puladi raised himself on his mound of cushions, and stared again at the face of the youth. "I've changed my mind about sedation. It's not much to my taste, to be connected to a human vegetable all through the night. Does he have intelligence?"

"Normal, so far as I can tell."

"Then next time, there will be no need to bring him here unconscious."

"But you will not be able to talk to each other. He was awake for a while yesterday, and no one understood a word that he said—naturally, he speaks only the crude babble of his time and place."

"That's exactly what language teaching machines are for. I'll instruct Kelb to make one available to you, something with a maximum modern vocabulary. I don't want you to fry his brain, but I do want him able to talk and listen, next time you bring him here."

"Very good," Salino pushed the bed in front of him, but at the door of the chamber he paused and glanced over his shoulder.

"Yes?"

"Puladi, it would be easy to lie to you."

"At your peril. What is it?"

"I do not want to give you false hopes. The new blood has produced a great improvement, but it will surely be only temporary.

The prognosis is much the same."

"How long?"

"Maybe it has increased from one month, to four."

"Then keep working on it, Dr. Salino. For your sake as much as mine." And, when the other man stared at him in perplexity, "How many days do you think you will have left, when I am gone? Take a look at Kelb, at Mavermine, at Jaworsky, at any of the Administrators who can't wait for me to die. Someone will win in the battle for the succession. But whoever it is, do you think that you will become his physician, as you are mine? Or is it more likely that you will be snuffed out like a candle, as someone who was close to me?"

Puladi laughed. He was feeling too well to take anything very seriously—a dangerous mood, as he recognized. "Keep me, alive, doctor. I can get along without you. But you will not get along without me."

When the bed was wheeled in three days later, Puladi stared at it and turned on Salino.

"What the devil are you doing? I told you that this time he was not to be sedated."

"He is not sedated." Salino was pushing the wheeled bed, and he had no hands free. But he shrugged, to express his own amazement. "He is asleep. He fell asleep as I was bringing him here."

"Knowing that he was on his way to me? Incredible! Wake him up. At once."

But the slim figure on the bed was already stirring. He yawned hugely, to show the tip of a pink tongue and splendid, even teeth. He sat up and stared all around him.

Puladi saw that his eyes, open at last, were a clear and startling brown, with hints of amber at the inner edge of the irises. The expression on the face was different, too, the placidity of sleep exchanged for an alert confidence.

"Hook us up for the night, Salino," Puladi said, and to the young man on the bed next to him. "Can you understand me yet? Do you know who I am?"

"I can understand you." The reply was clear and quick, with only a slight hesitancy on the longest word. "You are Puladi."

"That's a good start. I'm also, so you don't have any doubts about it, the man who brought you here."

"You are the man who is stealing my blood."

Dr. Salino flinched. "I told you to show respect!"

"You also warned me not to lie. Which do you want?"

"I want—I mean, Puladi wants—I assume Puladi wants—"

Salino hesitated, while Puladi sighed and said, "Finish connecting us, doctor, and get out of here. Quickly. I know what Puladi wants, a lot better than you'll ever know." And to the youth sitting up on the bed, "I'm going to be working for much of the night. You will speak only when you are spoken to."

That earned Puladi a cocking of the head and a raising of dark eyebrows. But there was silence as Salino finished his work, made a final check that the remote telemetry system to his own lab was all in order, and at last obtained permission to leave.

"Take your cues from him," Puladi said, as Salino left the chamber. "His boss is gone, and her boss is gone, and the two before that are gone."

"Gone." The youth's eyes rolled. "You say gone, but you mean dead."

"Quite right. I do mean dead, although I never see it happen. I say the word, and the guards take care of the rest." Puladi glanced along the line of the I/V, then switched his attention to the other's face. "You've only been here a short time, and I suppose you haven't learned. You should be afraid of me. You're not. Why aren't you afraid?"

"I was afraid, once, of...something. But not any more. Not of you, not of anything."

"We can change that. Kelb and company were supposed to give you a background briefing along with the language. It looks like they didn't go far enough. How much do you know about me?"

"That you are Puladi, although that is perhaps not your original name. That you are 39 years old. That you have killed many, many men and women. That you run the world, and have done so for 18 years."

"Not quite. The world has its own power and energy. It runs itself. I control the world, which is a much more delicate business. But the

rest is accurate. See those displays?" Puladi pointed a bony finger at the wall. "I can look at anything, anywhere, anytime, no matter how much people may imagine it is hidden. I have sensors that appear as a fly on the wall, a dog's eye, an open rose, the flame of a candle. And because I can see so much, anyone but a fool must assume that I can see everything. That is the secret of power: information, and the assumption by others of complete information."

"I think that you are boasting."

"Not at all." But Puladi realized, with a rush of self-awareness that he had not felt for years, that the youth on the bed was perhaps right. Certainly, he had been emphasizing his powers. Why did he have this odd need to show off, and to such a nonentity?

"Maybe I am boasting—a little. But everything that I have said is true."

The lad sniffed. "Then if you are so all-powerful, why are you afraid?"

Puladi laughed. If Kelb or Mavermine could hear that! "What makes you think that I am afraid? I don't fear, boy, I am feared. There's a huge difference. Watch me, now. I'm going to take us on a world tour."

He began to work the keypads in the arms of the chair, varying location and scale and point of view like a master organist. There was no way that the youth on the bed could possibly appreciate just how much skill went into manipulating the sensors, or to juggling among complex data banks; but there were views to offer that alone would be enough to astonish. Puladi swooped from salt mining on the shores of the Dead Sea, to telescopes on the highest peaks of the Karakoram ranges, to the dark abyssal Pacific trench where the semi-organic submersibles winnowed out high-grade metallic nodules.

Finally he moved to the orbiting monitors that were patiently scanning the surface, inch by inch. He used them to zoom in, so that the view showed the North American continent, narrowed to the central plains, then a sprawling city landscape, and at last to the gold spire on one great building.

"That's us," Puladi froze the display. "We're sitting inside that building, at this very moment. And if you want to see what's happening in any particular room, I can show you. Want to take a look?"

There was no reply. Puladi turned. He saw to his great annoyance that the youth on the bed was sound asleep. How dare he sleep, in the presence of Puladi?

But how young the boy looked, and how peaceful and relaxed. He had said that he was not afraid—and amazingly, he had been telling the truth. A terrified person could not sleep, Puladi knew that very well.

In that same moment he felt a great wave of weariness and tranquility sweep through him, as though it had transferred instantly along the line of the IV. He yawned—once. The screens on the wall seemed to dance and flicker before his eyes. Half a minute later he was gone, down into the deepest slumber of his adult life.

**I** think I am 15," said the voice from the darkness. "But we do not—did not—think of years as you count them, and I cannot be sure."

Puladi grunted. The viewing screens were all turned off. He did not have the energy, or maybe it was the desire, to look at them. Three more days had passed, they were deep into the third treatment, and according to Dr. Salino he was physically stronger than he had been for years; but he knew, better than anyone, that the mind and body were deeply interlocked. He did not feel worse, but he felt different. Diffuse, drifting, disembodied.

"Before I was brought here," the voice continued, "I did not know that there could be so many years. We were sure that the world must end, long before two full thousands of years had passed. But it did not. We were wrong about that; about many things."

Puladi touched the IV. He had become so used to it, he hardly

knew that it was attached to his arm. The strongest link in the world connected him to that slender figure on the bed, unseen in the darkness: the link of blood. Blood. If one had to choose a single word to stand for the whole of human history, could there be a better one? Blood lines, blood feuds, blood money, blood sports, blood oaths, blood ties. Royal blood. Blue blood. Hot blood. Bad blood. Written in blood.

"Do you?" said an insistent voice.

"Do I what?" While Puladi drifted far away, the other must have gone on talking.

"Remember. What you were like, when you yourself were 15 years old."

Puladi sighed. "Yes, indeed. Like it was yesterday. Closer than yesterday."

"You were not—afraid?"

"Not the slightest bit. That was the year that I realized I had unique genius; the time when I discovered the data banks." Puladi sat up straighter, buoyed by memory. "It was bliss. Everything that I needed came to me so easily. It was as though I had already known it. While others plodded and staggered from one data level to another, I was a lightfoot dancer, making great leaps that no one else had ever dreamed possible. By the time that I was 16, I could access anything: the most secret files, the most hidden code, the deepest data layers. No one else even suspected what I was doing. They were like blind people, in a world where I alone was sighted. And all the data banks were interlocked! I realized then that I could own everything. In another five years, I did."

"And it made you happy?"

"Of course. Whatever I wanted was mine—is mine."

"Except good health."

"I have not given up the hope of that. Though you were a great disappointment to me."

"My blood?"

Puladi decided that he must have said that word aloud, at some point in his musings. "Your blood is fine. But I did not bring you two thousand years and more, just for your blood. I thought I was bringing someone else, someone with the power to cure me."

"A healer. I understand." The youth was silent for a few moments, and when he spoke again his voice was wistful and reflective. "There was a time, just two of my years ago, when I thought that I might be a great healer. People told me that I had the gift, and I felt it move within me."

"What happened?"

"I saw a vision. I became afraid. I made a choice. But you, if you were healed, would you then hope to live forever?"

"Let's just say, for a long, long time."

"But you would live hated, for all those years. And who would want to live hated? Puladi, even your assistants do not love you, though they pretend love. They hate you, too. I can feel it in them."

"Of course they do. But they obey."

"But if they hate you, why don't they do something?"

"Carrion crows will not tear at living flesh. They await my death, when the time will come for them to fight among themselves."

"How can they rule, without your knowledge of the data banks?"

"Because they expect to inherit my monitoring and control system. World control would be impossible without it, but it becomes easy with it. The genius, you see, lies in setting up the system, far more than in operating it."

"When you die, I expect that I will die, too. They hate me also."

"A shrewd and accurate observation," Puladi smiled in the darkness. "They hate you, because they know that your visits here prolong my life."

"Administrator Kelb pretends otherwise. He suggests that I am brought here at night only for your sexual pleasures. Why do you permit such talk?"

"Kelb's time will come—soon. Anyway, in my condition perhaps I feel flattered. You would not understand that. You are too young to have had lovers."

*Continued on page 68*





Working inside the hospital's violent ward, Ethan had grown used to dealing with his patients' demons. But he hadn't counted on coming face to face with a dragon!

# A PICTURE OF JESUS

BY PIERS ANTHONY

*Illustration by Nick Smith*

**I**T WAS DULL IN THE VIOLENT WARD. ETHAN had worked there only two weeks, but an hour had been enough to satisfy him that the patients were the opposite of violent. This was simply the dumping place for the ones that didn't fit in elsewhere in the hospital. And, it seemed, for the aides with least seniority, who had no choice about assignments.

One patient was a fat old man, cheerful but incoherent. Say "Hello" to him and he would smile and respond "Zig—zig—zzigh." That was about the extent of his vocabulary. Mucous tended to collect in his throat; periodically he would hawk it up and spit on the floor. But usually the spittle didn't clear his bulging belly; it would hang there in yellow gobs until someone came to clean him off. Now that was Ethan's job. Despite that, he liked Zig; the man certainly meant no harm, and made no trouble.

Another patient was small and lean. He muttered constantly and mostly incoherently. He seemed to hate the world, but he internalized it, ignoring the aides. When Ethan helped him bathe, he saw that the man had an enormous hernia filling his scrotum. He reported it to the hospital authorities, but nothing was done. Apparently it wasn't worthwhile to mess with what was termed a benign condition. So it was ignored, and the violent ward was the place to ignore it.

Another patient was young. He lived normally in the regular men's ward, but periodically he got wild, and then they would put him in a straitjacket, sedate him, put a tube through his nose into his stomach, and force-feed him until he settled down. A day or so usually did it. Every so often he would make strangling noises, but it was because of the tube; he wasn't in physical trouble. Then he would return to the men's ward for a few more days.

Sometimes they would dump a patient here after he had shock treatment. Electroshock was horrible to watch; it looked as if the man were dying of torture and going into instant rigor mortis. But he was unconscious; it was a controlled seizure, and it did seem to improve attitude. When the man woke, his mind would be blank. He would ask endless questions: "Where am I? How did I get here? How can I get out?" Ethan would try to explain, but he could see that he just wasn't making much sense to the patient. It would be several hours before the patient achieved stability, and then he would be returned to his usual ward.

WHEN THERE WAS ULYSSES. HE SAT STARING AT THE WALL and blinking. But when Ethan brought his tray with food, he would focus on it and eat it efficiently. He would take his own shower when asked to, and was able to handle the toilet cleanly, which was more than could be said for many other patients. He seemed, well, sane, when he was doing something. It was as if he could interact with the world when he chose to, but just seldom bothered.

Finally, in a dull period, Ethan sat down beside him and tried to make conversation. "Hello, Ulysses. I'm Ethan."

"Frome?"

"What?" He was startled by the fact that the man had responded; he had never spoken to Ethan before.

Ulysses smiled. "Ah, you don't get the education we did in my day. Ethan *Frome* is a novel by Edith Wharton which shows the futility of foolish love. I meant no affront."

Sane? This man was completely lucid! But Ethan was wary, because some patients did have flashes of rationality. Indeed, some were completely sane, most of the time. It was their flashes of irrationality that made them unfit for general society. One had told him how he was driving from New York to Chicago when he blanked out; when he woke he was here at Bedlam. He seemed quite normal, but that could be extremely deceptive. So Ethan wasn't about to take Ulysses on faith, but he was interested in what the man had to say. So he encouraged him. "Foolish love?"

"Frome was locked into a sterile marriage. Then he met his wife's cousin and they fell in love. It was hopeless, so they tried to commit suicide together. They got on a bobbed and steered it into a tree. But they didn't die; they both wound up horribly crippled, while Frome's wife took care of them. It was, in a fashion, the wife's salvation."

Ethan shook his head. "You're right. That was foolish. Today the man would simply have dumped the wife for her cousin."

"They don't make morality the way they used to."

Which was something Ethan's grandfather might have said. "At any rate, I'm Ethan Drake, and I'm not about to try to commit suicide for a woman. But you—how is it that you are here, staring at the wall all day, when you are obviously rational?" He was afraid that question would snap the man back into his daze, but it had to be asked.

"I am rational. It is your society that is blind."

Uh-uh. It was starting. "In what way, Ulysses?"

The man turned a disquietingly knowing gaze on him. "Take my word: you are better off not knowing."

Ethan had a slight ornery streak. "Let me be the judge of that. What do you see in that wall?"

"I see a picture of Jesus."

So he was off the deep end about religion! Ethan looked at the wall. "All I see is a pattern of white paint and black stain. That wall is overdue for cleaning."

"That would be a shame. Jesus should not be hidden."

"But there's no picture there! It's just random splatters."

"So it may appear to you."

Ethan realized that he wasn't getting anywhere. He tried another tack. "Let's look at the wall together, and maybe you can explain

to me how to see what you see."

"This isn't wise."

Ethan never had liked being dismissed as if he were some slightly obtuse bystander, and he liked it even less from a mental patient. He was also afraid that if this dialogue broke off now, Ulysses would never speak to him again. Not because of any anger, but because the window of opportunity would be closed. Other aides would simply laugh if Ethan tried to tell them that the man was speaking rationally. "Tell me."

"If you insist. But you are apt to regret it."

The man was not being threatening. He seemed genuinely concerned for Ethan's state of mind. What a reversal! "I think I will regret it if I don't get your side of things."

"Then I will tell you my story. If it begins to disturb you, or if you find yourself believing it, then you must break off, for your own safety. What I have to say concerns phenomenal insight, and power through that insight, but equivalent danger. You have used a computer?"

"Sure. I spent an hour on a letter, then lost it by hitting Delete instead of Print. That was one lesson I learned in a hurry!"

"Exactly. What magnifies your power of insight and action also magnifies your power of destruction. Misuse it, and you destroy yourself, even if your intention was innocent. Or you can be destroyed by the action of a computer virus, because you didn't guard against it."

The man was making uncanny sense. Why was he put away here in a mental institution, and why did he put up with it? They would let him out soon enough if he talked to the psychiatrists the way he was talking now. "I never made that mistake again, with the computer," Ethan said. "And I have an anti-virus program."

Again Ulysses turned his disquieting stare on him. "But when your life is at stake, there may be no second chance."

Despite himself, Ethan felt a ripping chill in the small of his back. "Are you telling me that I can put my life in danger, just by listening to you? What are you, an alien spy?"

"No, I am a normal human being, as you are. But I have learned to see in a way you have not. You can learn too, but you would not care to share my fate."

"I wouldn't care to be locked in a mental hospital when I was sane," Ethan agreed.

*Then there  
was Ulysses....  
He seemed  
quite normal,  
but that could  
be deceptive.*

"You may change your mind."  
He seemed so sure! But of course, the man was a patient. "Tell me your story."  
Ulysses began to speak.

**I** WAS ALWAYS A PUZZLE BREAK. If there was a riddle, I had to guess it; if there was a maze, I had to thread it; if there was a mystery, I had to fathom it. So when I saw the picture, it was a challenge. It was in a book, and it said it was a picture of Jesus. But it was just a mass of light and dark, as if someone had spilled coal dust on snow, and sections had melted together. I was never religious, so I had no imperative to see Jesus. But I wanted to know just what it was the author of that book thought I was supposed to see. So I stared at the page until my eyes grew bleary, seeing nothing of any man, let alone Jesus. I would have dismissed it, but I knew there had to be something, however far-fetched.

Next day I looked at it again, with similar lack of success. But I remembered a picture I had seen years before, with two women: the pretty young one I had seen right away, but eventually I had also seen the old woman. It was all in the way a person looked at it. The mind shapes familiar images from scattered hints, and so what was hidden can come into view, with the right mind-set.

But there was nothing there. Finally I gave up on it, frustrated. I set it on a corner table and went about my business elsewhere. It was open to the page, but out of the way.

Then, in the evening, I happened to catch sight of the page in the half light. And there was Jesus, gazing serenely at me. The irrelevant details had fuzzed out, allowing my eye to shape the whole, and it was the head and shoulders of Jesus, suddenly so clear I wondered how I had ever missed it.

I brought the book into the full light, and the picture vanished. The page was a random mess again. But now I had the key, and I took it back to the half light until I could see Jesus, then slowly into the full light. I analyzed it, and soon I was able to see Jesus in any light. But he faded out when I turned the picture upside down. So I kept working on it, training my eye, until I could see him from any angle and in any light. I had fathomed the unfathomable!

**T**HE NEXT DAY I LOOKED AT IT AGAIN, AND JESUS looked back at me. I was now a believer, in this sense. I could see what I had not seen before. I was flushed with victory.

I went out to do some shopping. When I looked at the sidewalk, I saw pictures on it: animals, flowers, human faces. They had been there all the time, but now I could see them. I had widened my horizons, by learning to see Jesus.

When I crossed the road I saw in its pattern of cracks and smudges a different scene. In fact I became aware of a different landscape, a natural one, where no road existed. The effect grew stronger as I concentrated, becoming three dimensional. It was as if the road were a picture, which I might almost walk into. But I couldn't; the true surface of the road seemed like a pane of glass, disappearing, but my feet still found it. This did not detract from the realism of the picture; a person may gaze through a window at the scene outside, yet his hand cannot pass through that window. He understands that the scene is there, but that he is barred from it, unless he breaks the glass or finds some way around it. I was fascinated. In fact I forgot my errand, and

simply meandered, viewing the new realm. So much I had never seen before!

Then I came to an awesome chasm that crossed the road and the terrain on either side. It was so deep I was afraid to try to cross it, though I knew it was just a picture. I stood at the brink, gazing down into its murky depths.

Someone came up behind me. I was so distracted that I never noticed until there came a touch on my elbow. "Don't do that," she whispered. "Ignore it. Walk right on across."

Startled, I followed her guidance, and walked with her across the chasm. I looked at her, trying to determine whether I knew her, but she seemed unfamiliar. "Why—?" I asked, somewhat at a loss.

"For God's sake, act normal!" she snapped. "Have you no common caution?"

"But I don't think we've ever met before," I protested. "I'm Ulysses. You're—?"

"Chloris," she said tersely. She forged straight ahead, ignoring the frightening landscape I suspected she saw.

"Well, Chloris, why are you, well, picking me up like this?" She wasn't beautiful, but neither was she ugly; she had the appeal of youth, which to my middle-aged eye was considerable.

"Because I don't want the dragon to eat

you before you catch on."

"Dragon!" I exclaimed, laughing.

"Just keep walking, and I'll explain," she said grimly.

Realizing that she wasn't joking, I did as she asked. I kept walking beside her, which was no chore. "I suppose you know that I'm seeing strange scenery."

"That's obvious." Chloris glanced around, but she did it without moving her head. "What brought you to the breakthrough?"

"A picture of Jesus."

She sighed. "I wish they'd abolish those pictures! People think they're getting a religious experience, and then the dragon kills them."

"You act as if there really is a dragon!"

"Listen, idiot!" she hissed. "There is a dragon, and it will be the last creature you see if you don't ignore it."

"I don't understand! Am I supposed to see this thing, or not see it?"

"Both. You are seeing the larger reality, which has always existed, but few people manage to attune their minds to it. They are so accustomed to shutting out things that they actually shut out much of reality itself. That's their salvation. But those who succeed in seeing more are in trouble. So if you see a dragon, pretend you don't. Just walk right by it, or even through it, and don't flinch. Your life depends on it."

"My life!" I said, amazed at her claim.

"Your life." Chloris looked around again, only her eyes moving. "And mine too, if the dragon catches on that I see. I'm risking myself by helping you. Don't make me regret it."

I still tilted the idea of walking with a young woman, so I decided to play the game. "I'll ignore any dragons," I agreed.

"You had better. They have been around since the days of the dinosaurs—in fact I think they are the dinosaurs, in a more advanced state. Just as we are primates in an advanced state. The dragons are as smart as we are, and much more deadly, and we can't escape them because our limited world isn't real to them. We have been spreading across their habitat, building cities in their hunting grounds, but they don't care because as long as we are unaware of them, we are harmless to them. But they know that we could cause them mischief, if we saw them. So they kill those of us who see them. Unless we fool them into thinking

*There is a  
dragon, and it  
will be the last  
creature you  
see if you don't  
ignore it.*

that we remain oblivious. So that is what we have to do. Always. Or else."

"Are you saying that these pictures I'm seeing—that there are dragons in them? But since I can't go into those pictures, nothing in them can hurt me. So why should I worry about dragons?"

"Because they aren't limited the way we are. They can see us and hear us all the time, though they don't seem to have bothered to learn to understand our language. If they decide to, they can chomp on us, and when they do, we feel it. It's one-sided: we can't hurt them, but they can hurt us. They've been aware of full reality longer than we have, ever since about 85 million years ago when they moved into it, and they have learned ways to handle it that we haven't. Maybe some year we'll learn to—but only if they don't realize that we're doing it. That's why we have to be excruciatingly careful. That's really why I'm helping you: because if I let you blunder and attract their attention to yourself, they will kill you, and perhaps realize that more of us are seeing them. Then they will be more careful, and more of us will die. So we have to educate you quickly."

"So it's not that you care about me as a person," I said dryly. "You just don't want me to mess it up for the rest of you."

"Exactly." Her emphatic agreement set me back. I had thought I was speaking at least halfway humorously. Evidently not.

"So if I don't see a dragon, I can do what I want," I suggested.

"No," Chloris said. "You never know when a dragon is watching. So you tune out the larger world as well as you can. After a while it becomes second nature. When you get so that others who can see don't realize that you are one of us, then you're safe. As safe as it gets, for us; we can never rest as easily as we did in ignorance."

I would have thought she was crazy, but I did see what she called the larger world, and she knew I saw it. So if she was crazy, so was I. "Where are we going?" I inquired.

"That's right," she agreed. "We can't just walk aimlessly. We've already gone too far together to be strangers. We'll have to be dating."

"I'd love it," I said gallantly. "But aren't I a little old for you?"

"Not for real," Chloris said impatiently. "Just until we can separate without arousing suspicion. You'll have to see me to my apartment, I suppose."

Who was I to object? So I took her hand, and we walked on like a middle-aged fool with a young thing, which was as accurate a description as any.

**T**HEN I SAW SOMETHING. IT WAS WALKING THROUGH AN INTERSECTION. Maybe through a building, too; our world seemed to be insubstantial to it. It looked like a monstrous dinosaur—or a dragon. I turned my head to get a better look at it.

"Don't do that!" Chloris whispered. "Ignore it!"

It really was a dragon—and she saw it too.

The dragon turned its head, and caught me staring at it. Its ears perked up.

"Oh, the fat's in the fire now!" Chloris whispered. "Our only hope is to fake the dragon out. Play along—and don't look at the dragon!" She hauled on my arm until I turned to her, then put her arms around me.

All right. I was shaken by the sight of the dragon, but I could hardly think of a nicer way to reassure it that my attention was elsewhere. I embraced her. Her body was slender and supple, and

though her face was not glamorous, it was young, and that counted for a lot. I wouldn't have minded at all if this had been real.

Chloris' eyes flicked in that headless way they had. I realized that this was so the dragon couldn't tell that she was looking around. She was making more sense to me, now that I had seen the monster. "It's

coming to investigate," she whispered. "We'll have to make it look authentic. Make your hands stray."

"Stray?" I had to be misunderstanding.

"Do it!" she snapped.

So I let my right hand slide down to stroke her posterior. What illicit fun!

Then I saw the dragon, much closer, coming up behind her. My hand clenched involuntarily, giving her a healthy pinch. Ooops.

"Damn," she murmured. "We'll have to kiss."

**S**O WE KISSED, BUT IT WASN'T nearly as much fun as it should have been, because now the dragon was right up close, and I could hear the bellows of its breathing. The thing was huge and hot, and its scales rustled slightly as it twisted around. I kept my eyes squinted shut now, but I felt the dragon's breath on my neck. At any other time such a kiss would have held the

whole of my attention, but it was singularly difficult to tune out such a monster.

However, we couldn't kiss forever. I was running short of breath. So I drew back. "Let's go to your place, dear," I said, opening my eyes.

That's when my gaze met that of the dragon. It was only a yard away. I flinched.

The funny thing was that other people had collected, now, but they weren't looking at the dragon. They were looking at us. They really couldn't see the monster. They were limited in their perception to the smaller world. They hadn't seen the picture of Jesus—or what it led to.

"I can't wait that long," Chloris gasped. She seemed genuinely desperate, but not because of any passion for me. "There must be a private spot close by."

She was trying to make it seem authentic. I knew her desperation was because of the dragon, but it was having its effect on me too. How far would she go, to fool the monster?

I started to unbuckle her blouse. The other people watched, enjoying the spectacle of a couple about to make love in public. The average man is not only blind to the larger world, he has the sensitivity of a clod of manure.

Then the dragon goosed me. Its tail came around and rammed me in the rear. I jumped.

Immediately Chloris reached around and grabbed my rear, as if she were the cause of my reaction. She was trying valiantly, but the dragon wasn't fooled. It opened its mouth. I couldn't help staring at the very large array of teeth.

I realized that this was fight or flight time. There was no hope of fighting the dragon. "Run!" I cried. I turned Chloris loose and started to move.

"No!" she protested. She still thought she could pretend ignorance of the monster. She stood still.

I hesitated, turning back. I didn't want to leave her. Hardly knew her, but she had done her best to help me. Yet what could I do? The dragon's head was bigger than Chloris' whole body.

Nevertheless, I cast about for some weapon. There was only a plank lying in the gutter, perhaps fallen from a truck. Stymied, I stared stupidly as the dragon's head struck at Chloris. It seemed to occur in slow motion, but that was because of my horror.

*If I let you  
blunder and  
attract their  
attention to  
yourself, they  
will kill you.*

At the last moment the dragon closed its mouth, and shoved Chloë with its nose. She stumbled back, propelled by that nose—and fell into the path of a passing car.

There was the squeal of brakes, but it was too late. The car had struck her before the driver could react. It slowed to a stop, but Chloë's was just a heap in the road. "She jumped right in front of me!" the driver cried, wild-eyed.

"No!" I cried. "The dragon did it! The dragon shoved her!" Beyond caution, I heaved up the plank and ran at the dragon, clumsily trying to spear it with my improvised lance. "Die, dragon!" I screamed.

I scored on it—but the plank passed right through the monster's body, and I did too. I couldn't touch the monster, literally.

Then there were hands on me, holding me back. I was still shouting. "The dragon! The dragon! Can't you see it? The dragon killed her!"

They wrestled me to the pavement and strung rope around me. The dragon merely watched. Suddenly I realized why: it didn't need to kill me, because I was obviously crazy. The other people thought I was the one who had shoved Chloë into the car and killed her. A lover's quarrel. They would never comprehend the truth.

AND SO I WAS FOUND INNOCENT BY REASON OF INSANITY,"  
Ulysses concluded. "I didn't try to fight it. I knew the dragon would have killed me too, otherwise. But the dragons leave me alone, as long as I'm incarcerated here. So I drew a picture of Jesus on the wall, using smudges in lieu of paint, and I stare at it, the reminder of my folly."

"But if—if you believe this is true—the world should know," Ethan said. He now understood why Ulysses was confined, and it wasn't because of any invisible dragons, but he still wasn't quite satisfied. The man could have a better life, right here in the hospital, if he just talked to others instead of staring at the wall.

"If I try to tell the world, one of two things will happen," Ulysses said. "Either I won't be believed, in which case I have accomplished nothing but my own discredit, or I will be believed, in which case the dragons will strike ruthlessly to eliminate all believers. I saw what they did to Chloë, and the guilt of that will forever be on my conscience. She tried only to help me, and she paid with her life. I don't want any more deaths to mourn."

Ethan nodded. It did make sense. Either the guy was crazy or he wasn't; why should he have to choose between incarceration and death? But there was a third possibility. "Suppose you are neither crazy nor correct, but simply had a bad vision?" he asked. "So there are no dragons, and if you just recognize that, you can be released and pursue a normal life?"

Ulysses turned that disquieting stare on him once more. "I hope you believe that, because it will save you from a terrible revelation. Look at the wall again, and pray you do not see Jesus."

Ethan gazed at the wall. The random pattern of stains remained. He concentrated, giving it his best effort, because he didn't want to be blinded by prejudice, he wanted to be quite sure there was nothing.

He realized that one part of the pattern might almost resemble an eye. Another could be taken as the highlight of a chin. And a gently curving line might be called the bridge of a nose, with the light on one side, shadow on the other. Maybe, by a sufficient stretch of the imagination, it would be possible to picture a crude face there. Follow the nose-line down, and there was maybe a nostril; follow it up, and there was the arc of an eyebrow. The larger black and white patches framed the head, and below were the shoulders and chest, with a loosely hanging garment....

It was, indeed, a picture of Jesus. Suddenly the calm, understanding gaze met his own gaze. "I see—" Ethan breathed, astonished at the clarity and detail of it, where before there had been only smears.

"You see nothing!" Ulysses snapped. "It's just a stained wall!"

"No, you are right! It's Jesus." Ethan looked around. "And there on the wall behind you is a beautiful natural landscape. And on the floor—why, there's a river, with fish swimming in it, and a mermaid! And on the ceiling—what's that creature?"

"It's a dragon!" Ulysses whispered. "Avert your gaze, man, before it sees you looking! Do you want to die?"

Ethan yanked his eyes away. He focused on Ulysses. "Now look," he said, shaken. "I agree there are pictures, with astonishing realism; it's as if this entire hospital ward is just a glass shell, through which we can see a fantastic larger world. But that's all it is, of course: just a pattern of pictures. Pictures can't harm anyone. So why not appreciate them?"

"I can do so," Ulysses said. "Because I'm certified crazy, and no one believes me. But you must not, because you're sane. Now I see I should never have spoken to you, never have told you the truth. I thought you were too ignorantly self-assured to see, but I mis-

judged you. For your own safety, for your very life, shut it out, man, shut it out!"

ETHAN STILL DID NOT BELIEVE IN ANY INVISIBLE DRAGONS. But the extent of the revelation that the picture of Jesus had brought him shook his very nature. Ulysses had been right about Jesus, and right about the hidden larger world beyond the normal one, at least in appearance. Suppose he were right about the rest?

"Of course it's just an optical illusion," Ethan said. "I tried to empathize with you, to see what you see, and I succeeded. But the difference between us is that I know it's not real."

"Yes, yes!" he agreed. "Hang on to that! Don't look at it any more. Look for the stains, the cracks, the meaningless randomness beyond the limited world. Know that I am crazy, and you don't want to be that way. Go away from me; when you return, I won't talk to you at all, so you'll know it was just your idle fancy that I had a lucid moment. Don't put your death on my conscience."

"But you know I can't pretend that you weren't lucid!" he said. "I may disagree with your vision, but certainly you can talk. You don't have to pretend—"

But he saw that the man's gaze had wandered. Ulysses was now staring at the wall again, ignoring him.

"Hey, don't do that!" Ethan exclaimed.

Ulysses glanced at him. His eyes were unfocused, and a bit of drool was starting down his chin. He was playing the idiot.

Disgusted, Ethan turned away. But still he saw the larger world. It had been a job to fathom it, but once he had done so, he couldn't unfathom it, any more than he could forget how to ride a bike once he had learned.

Well, he would do something about this. He would go fetch a supervisor, and show him the picture of Jesus. He would get others to see the larger world. Then Ulysses would have to talk to them, and whatever truth there was behind this vision would emerge.

He turned the corner to enter the wing of the ward where the phone was.

There, beside the phone, was the dragon. □

*The dragon  
turned and  
caught me  
staring at it.  
Its ears  
perked up.*





The lush canvases of Jim Burns transport us to another world.

# BIO OF A SPACE ARTIST

BY JANE FRANK

**W**hat sets Jim Burns apart from other science fiction artists? Could it be that his futuristic landscapes are so believable, so palpably possible? Perhaps it is his active imagination, and excellent technique.

Or could it be his aerodynamically sleek and sensual spaceships? Burns' saucers hovered on book covers and set a brave new standard for the gleaming and smooth style of spaceship at a time when sharp-nosed rockets were the norm.

Perhaps the difference is as simple as Harry Harrison, makes it to be. In an essay to commemorate Burns' stint as Artist Guest of Honor for the 1987 World Science Fiction Convention in Brighton, England, Harrison wrote that in Burns' art "you'll find the same love of texture in the softness of a woman's skin as you will in the brittle coldness of machined metal."

How does Burns manage to make stories come alive? How is he able to take the most obvious subject matter for a cover illustration, such as the image of an "illustrated" man for a novel by Ray Bradbury, and paint it as if his were the only, the best, the clearest possible way of imagining the heart of Bradbury's classic story? Understand this, and you may approach some of the power of a Burns painting.

"I like to make the hardware look as if there's some human thinking behind it," says Burns. "Or, even better, alien thinking."

One of the reasons Burns is different from anyone else is that he offers viewers of his work a complete vision. Beyond his ability to



render intricate details, the meticulous workmanship, and the seamless talent, there is the filling of each square inch of canvas with Burns' sophisticated depictions of alien cities, humanoid entities and futuristic technologies made to look as if they were operable today.

**M**any professional artists have mastered technique, but relatively few of them actually read all the manuscripts they're given. "I try to be totally honest to the tale or the section of the tale illustrated," according to Burns. "The idea always comes from the writer. Everything I read always unfolds visually like a film in my mind. I suppose I mentally freeze an image and translate it onto a board in paint."

Fewer still can claim the skills to fly aircraft. While there is a tradition in the field for science fiction artists (as well as writers) to derive their professional interest in science fiction from their personal or occupational interests in scientific fields, Burns not only loves the literature, but also bases his rich and complex interplanetary scenes on his very real-world experiences with flight.

It is only after great prompting that Burns will humbly disclose that he was "fortunate indeed to be actually good at Art, and that it is quite pleasant to win honors." He has won the BSFA, the British equivalent of our Hugo, more times than any other single British artist, and in 1987 he became the first non-U.S. Hugo winner. His paintings have toured both the Continent and the U.S., the latter



under the auspices of The Society of Illustrators, which also awarded him Certificates of Merit. Even with his great success, Burns still looks back wistfully and yearns to be the RAP pilot he almost became.

There is nothing else like a Jim Burns painting. It will be arresting. Every painting Burns completes is memorable in a distinctive way that cannot be confused with any other artist's style. The discovery, development, and maintenance of one's personal artistic voice is a tremendous accomplishment for any artist and the mark of maturity which cannot be taught. True originality always contains this basic element of creation.

Burns lays the roots of his success at the feet of a remembered neighbor who, during his otherwise uneventful childhood in Cardiff South Wales (UK), supplied the young Burns with "vast heaps of paper... (a) free and seemingly infinite supply (which) probably played a more important part in my developing interest in Art than I am consciously aware."

After Burns' professed too brief encounter with flyboy stardom,





where he did his best to "hoodwink instructors into believing I was von Richtoffen's reincarnation." Burns left RAF training and turned instead to art training. This turned out to be his best possible solo flight, for soon, his illustration of Lancaster bombers taking off won him his first commercial art job. A fledgling illustration agency in London, Young Artists (now Arena Agency) quickly signed him on after seeing his graduation portfolio.

Burns' modest demeanor stands in vivid contrast to the confident ease with which artificial worlds are handled by his science-fictional vision. His mind is capable of assimilating whatever massive bits of data are thrown at it by authors comfortable with scientific invention, and then manipulating those bits down to accessible visual and emotional size. "I particularly want to try to convey artifacts which are the products of truly alien minds and different sets of perceptions. And to suggest materials other than wood or metal or plastic—somehow! Ships of onyx, opalescent vessels plowing bizarre oceans of liquid metal under skies tended by twin or triple suns—all that sort of stuff!" The textures, the smooth alien round-

*ABOVE: Cover art for The Illustrated Man. The inner world created by Burns' imagination for the famous illustrated man is one that captures the strength, the dark beauty and the magical elements produced by Bradbury's imagination. FAR LEFT: The Stainless Steel Rat's Revenge, from the book by Harry Harrison. Burns placed the canny outlaw in a most provocative context—in the 25th century between two colorful ladies. PREVIOUS PAGE: In Aristal, Jim Burns poses his figures to suggest their decadent, elitist social positions—a fitting interpretation for Walter Jon Williams' novel, and one earning Burns a Hugo nomination.*



ness of his space craft, the glistening mysterious details and edges, the depth that he brings to the concepts, are all accentuated by their association with the living creatures in his work.

**D**ark, moody landscapes, interiors of spaceships, sterile laboratories—all can be the perfect setting for the mysterious beings that inhabit writers, and therefore Burns' creations. These can be humanoid or alien forms ranging from the severely "biologically challenged," to the horrifyingly alluring, but they share in common a unique visual appeal. The effect is often heightened by the juxtaposition of aliens with human figures. Whether surprised in mid-action, or going about their business, such as it might be in some imagined place and time, they all belong where they are. Burns' alien and human forms are almost photographically real, and compel a viewer's attention, forcing him or her to identify with the strange by making the exotic beautiful.

Such potential is evident in Burns' earliest works, but his power has grown along with his career, and with the field itself. The 1970s and 1980s saw a tremendous surge in the market for adult SF literature, and a commensurate need for artwork of the same calibre to carry the narrative burden of stories by the likes of heavyweights such as Robert Silverberg.

In 1980, Hollywood came to Burns. Ridley Scott offered Burns the chance to work on *Blade Runner*. "They wanted quick-fire ideas on paper. I was at the time working in oil paint almost exclusively, and to do quick-fire things in oils is impossible. Nonetheless, it was a terrific experience, and when I got back from Los Angeles, it made me move from oils to acrylics because you can work more speedily and spontaneously in that medium."

Also in the 1980s, U.S. publishers took the opportunity to buy into a Burns future, and there was no stopping him. Just about every leading publisher has used his services. Today, more than two-thirds of his illustration commissions are from American publishers, and Burns is pleased to supply them. Paper Tiger Press has published two collections of his work: *Lightship* and *The Jim Burns Portfolio*.

His future remains booked solid: illustration assignments, and the possibility of another illustrated book similar to that of *Planet Story* which he created with Harry Harrison. Not just another art



*LEFT: In the 1988 painting Ancient Light, Burns continues to push the boundaries of repulsion and beauty with one of the best of his female aliens. They are always powerful, disturbing and alluring.*

*BELOW: Star Cod is planned as the cover for a book to be written and illustrated by Burns. This painting was a personal experiment enabling him to "play with contrasting textures and bulbous shapes." At first sight almost comic, the humor of these interstellar fishy aliens is belied by their environment. BOTTOM: This 1992 novel, Hearts, Hands and Voices by Ian McDonald, is currently nominated for the British Arthur C. Clarke award.*



book, this new project, now only in the dreaming stage, teams him with Greg Bear, another of his faves, who says "Jim and I have danced around the notion of doing more work together, and one of these days our schedules will allow that."

Bear owns the original Burns painting done for his book *Eos*, which he claims is thoroughly extraordinary. To hear Bear tell it, Burns had taken the abstractions and the vague descriptions of the novel and without talking to him had put Bear's vision onto board with complete accuracy. "Burns showed me what I was writing about and in doing so created what I believe is one of the greatest science fiction illustrations of all time—but then, I'm prejudiced."

Only a poet would be able to improve on the many laudatory words written in Burns' praise over the years. And quite frankly, while it is helpful to be able to describe the art one sees, to detail technique, palette, and composition, words can never be enough.

Despite Silverberg's close-to-perfect description of Burns' painting as "sleek and shining...and marvelously inventive...from the glistening surfaces down into the mysterious revelatory depths," art is ultimately a visual, not a verbal experience. Art is singular, profound, and complete in itself, little needing any other explanation. Burns' work will either hit you between the eyes and make a dent, or it will not. But don't take my word for it. Decide for yourself. □



# THE FIFTEENTH STATION

*Continued from page 55*

The bed next to Puladi creaked, at some violent movement.

"That is not true! I am 15 years old. I am a man, and I have had women—many, many women!—since I was 13."

"My apologies. Perhaps you would like a woman tomorrow? Or ten women, or a hundred, or a thousand? I am Puladi, and I own the world. Make your request. If it is not unreasonable, I will grant it."

There was silence from the bed. When it finally came, the voice sounded flat and empty. "Dr. Salino told me never to lie to you. But I did. I have not had lots of women. In truth, I have never had any woman, although most youths of my age have known them."

"There are lies and lies. Forget it. My offer still stands. Make your request. Do you want a hundred women?"

"No." There was a sigh. "I do not want even one. But I do have a request. I want to visit the laboratory of Professor Rustum Belur. I want to see the Chronoclast, the machine that brought me here."

**D**r. Salino was in a difficult position. He dared not argue openly with Puladi, no matter how strongly he disagreed with him. All he could do was battle Kelb—who already resented and hated the physician, for his guaranteed round-the-clock access to his master. Salino flourished the medical records at the Administrator. "It was working, and all the evidence suggested to me that it would continue to work. There had been minor recent abnormalities, but conditions were stable for the first time in more than a year. Why did you take the risk?"

"What risk?" Kelb was quite ready to argue Puladi's case for him.

"How do I know what risk?" Salino looked to Puladi for support, and found none. "Suppose that the boy becomes sick, because of the different food in India—too sick for us to continue treatment when he returns? Suppose that he is killed in a transportation accident? Suppose that his return is delayed? Didn't you consider all those possibilities?"

"Naturally." Kelb's leonine face was smug. "And after assessing all factors, it was Puladi's own decision that the boy should go to Calcutta. Are you questioning his wisdom?"

Yes. The fatal word was on the tip of Salino's tongue. But before he could say it, and damn himself totally, Puladi finally spoke.

"Dr. Salino, all the risks that you mention are real, but they are risks to me more than to anyone. And most of them are already in the past. He has visited Belur's lab and seen the Chronoclast, and he is on his way back here. So now you wonder why I allowed him to do it—I can see the question in your face. The answer is simple: I was taking your advice. You told me that worry and stress change the chemical balance of the blood. Correct?"

"That is so."

"And the 'minor recent abnormalities' that you mentioned. They were in the blood being transferred to me. In its chemistry."

"True."

"So would you like to know what was causing it? Near the end of the last treatment session, he told me that the desire to go back to his own time had been growing on him, to the point where it was an obsession. I agreed to let him visit Belur and the Chronoclast, for one simple reason: I wanted him to know that a return to his own time is absolutely impossible. He is at last convinced. And he will be here tonight, in time for the next treatment. All right?"

Salino nodded, grudgingly satisfied.

He would have been amazed by Puladi's own unvoiced question to himself: Why had he really agreed to the visit to Calcutta? He did not know. And following that came the odd realization, of how

much he was looking forward to the coming nighttime session.

Ten hours later, Puladi was questioning the wisdom of his decision. The visit to the Chronoclast had on the face of it achieved just what he wanted. And yet something else had happened. He could read it on the countenance of the youth who lay on the bed next to his wheelchair. There were smudges of exhaustion beneath the clear brown eyes, and the mouth was more tightly drawn than before.

A boy had gone to Calcutta, and a man had returned.

"Did you see Rustum Belur himself?"

"For a few minutes." The tense mouth relaxed to a quick smile. "Did you know, Puladi, that he admires you greatly? He described you as a kind and generous man."

"Then he is indeed a rarity. I spared his life, that is all. On an impulse. One man, among many. I do not know how many." Puladi realized that he truly did not. The purges and the culling had gone on for so long, day after day and year after year. "Would you believe millions? Maybe ten millions?"

He was talking of matters about which he never talked; but the other did not seem shocked.

"No, I would not believe it." The brown eyes met Puladi's own, in a way that no man's had ever done. "I might believe 50 million. When you give an order to the guards, Kelb and Mavemine and Jaworsky compete in their zeal to make sure that it is carried out thoroughly. But you spared Belur, he said, when Kelb would cheerfully have destroyed him. And he said that you had every reason to have him killed. The Chronoclast was not working as he had promised. He knows the problem now."

Puladi felt a quiver of hope, and dismissed it at once as quite irrational. If Rustum Belur had found a way to access the future, the news would have come to him that same day. "What was wrong with the Chronoclast?"

"Nothing, in terms of its function. But he told you when he was here of a slight uncertainty in the transport time, which might give an hour or two of error over a couple of years. He did not know it then, but that error grows greatly for longer intervals. It grows—what is the word for it—quadratically?"

"That sounds right. However, that was not the problem when the Chronoclast brought you here."

"The final error can be large."

"In this case it was more than large. It was fundamental. But to use the Chronoclast to return you, or anything else, to the past—"

"—is quite impossible, according to Dr. Belur. Just as you said."

"You are disappointed."

"Yes."

"Do not be." Puladi's voice was gentle. "You see, even if it had been possible, I could never let you go. You are my lifeline."

"I know. But I thought, if you were dead...." He turned his head away, and closed his eyes.

Puladi turned away also, to stare at the bank of displays. If I were dead, you would soon be dead, too. I may be your tormentor, but I am also your protector. Kelb dare not touch you, or anyone, as long as I am alive.

And after that?

It was something he seldom considered, but maybe the time for such thinking was here. He recalled one of their late night exchanges:

"I was hoping for a miracle cure."

"And if you had found it, what then? No one lives forever."

"No. But maybe 30 years more, instead of a few months...."

"One month, or 30 years. There is no difference. It is how you live, not how long you live, that matters."

Words of wisdom. From a child.

And now, again, tonight. One dead, or 50 million. It is not how many you kill, but that you kill.

And he had done it all to preserve—what?

The screens in front of Puladi were restlessly active. All the displays were under his control. They were designed to report every doubtful case, leaving it to Puladi to evaluate later the need for action. More often than not he rejected their suggestions as unnecessary.

Would Keltb, or Mawermine, or Jaworsky, operate with as much restraint when he was gone? They did not understand the natural dynamics of human activities. If his successor took every report at face value, the world would turn into a sea of blood. And they would not even know how to destroy the system. He had protected against that very danger, so that he alone could disable it.

**P**uladi was roused by a whimper from the bed next to him. His companion had fallen asleep. He was dreaming. His dark head shook from side to side, and he was mouthing, "No, no, no."

Puladi gathered the long IV tube in one hand and reached across. He took warm brown fingers in his and pressed them gently. The contact sent an electric surge through his whole body.

"Wake up. Everything's all right. Come on, wake up, you are having a nightmare, that's all."

It took a few seconds until the brown eyes opened, and Puladi heard a quivering sigh.

"Oh, I am here."

"You are here. You are safe."

"I was dreaming. It was happening again. I was afraid."

"There is no need for fear. Tell me about it. If you can."

"It was the dream again, the one that I hoped was over forever."

He sat up, rubbing at his throat. "It came first when I was 12 years old. I was walking along a little valley between two hills, by the side of a river, through cedars and poplars and ash trees. The stream branched into two parts. The left side went past a little house, and a farmyard, and growing crops. A family was working in the fields, a man and a wife and five sons. And I knew I was that man, rejoicing in the gift of a long, hard, and satisfying life.

"But the right branch of the stream rose up toward the hills. I saw a crowd of people on the hillside, calling to me. They shouted that I was their champion, that I would rule the world, that I was so strong I could defeat Death itself. I would know praise, I would know glory, the world would be at my feet.

"I started their way, and they began throwing flowers on the ground, and cheering, and laughing. But when I drew close to them, the stream turned from water to blood. The sun vanished from the sky. Pain came from nowhere, in my hands and feet and side and head, all through my body. I felt to the ground; and I saw grinning Death, standing over me.

"That was the dream. For a full year it tortured me, over and over. Until finally, one night, I made a great effort. In my dream I closed my eyes and put my hands over my ears. I did not see the flowers or hear the cheers. I managed to turn around, and struggled back to where the stream divided. I went the other way, up the left hand branch to the quiet little farm. I stayed there. I became the farmer, happy with his wife and his children.

"And I woke. I never had that dream again. Until tonight. Then it came—but this time you were standing at the division in the stream, telling me that I must not take the peaceful branch. I must follow the other path, through pain and darkness, to fight Death himself."

Puladi was still holding that slender brown hand. He patted it reassuringly. "Dreams are dreams, nothing more. I'd hate to tell you my own nightmares. You are safe here. There is no reason at all to be afraid."

"But you are here. And you are afraid."

"To die? Everyone is afraid to die."

"I do not mean that. You are afraid of the world."

"Never." But Puladi found the clear brown eyes boring into his. "Never. Why do you say such a thing?"

"I talked with Rustum Belur. He could not understand why you spared his life, when it was so easy for you to allow Keltb to take him away and have him killed."

"Maybe I have killed enough."

"True. And why? Because if they were alive, you would fear what they might do. You did not kill Rustum Belur, only because you had no reason to fear him. He could do nothing to harm you. And if you are not afraid, why do you hide yourself away within this room?"

"Nonsense!" But Puladi could not meet those eyes any longer. He stared up at the displays. His free hand, without any thought on his part, began to tap at the keypad in the armrest of his wheeled chair. The screens came to life again.

This time it was not hidden meeting places, or furtive clusters of people on street corners, or two heads together in a dimly-lit bar or quiet coffeehouse. This time Puladi had unconsciously sent his sensors high and far, seeking out the beautiful and the spectacular.

The screens filled, one by one: a sunlit South American waterfall, Cheren-Meru, dropping 3,000 feet amid a mist of droplets and rainbow light; a towering thunderhead, black over the Java Sea, with lightning flickering through its turbulent base. Glittering Antarctic icebergs, calving away from the Ross ice shelf; whales, by the score and by the hundred, sounding and surfacing on their Pacific journey from pole to pole; dunes, hundreds of feet high, slinging and murmuring their mingling song to the Taklamakan desert; termite mounds, dotting an arid African plain like an army of 10-foot soldiers frozen in place and cased in brown cement; the northern tundra, with the midnight sun hovering on the horizon.

While those scenes flashed into place, a quiet voice at Puladi's side spoke to him, or maybe to itself. "But since there is still fear, even here, even for someone who controls the whole world, then there can be fear anywhere. Fear is natural, fear is inevitable. But it can be conquered. You are right, Puladi. It is wrong that I was so afraid. I must go back. I must take the road through pain and darkness. I must fight Death itself. And maybe I will triumph."

Puladi had needed the displays to calm his own thoughts. Now as he watched and listened, an idea flashed through his brain like jagged lightning.

"No. If I am afraid, it is not for me alone. It is for this. Think what may come after me. The jackals are already gathered, waiting for my death." Puladi gestured at the wall displays. "Look at Earth, so beautiful. When I am gone, what will happen to it? I have organized the world and forced it to peace. At my death it will fall to chaos."

"Is chaos different from freedom? I think not. I must go back."

The impossibility of that statement no longer mattered to Puladi. He writhed in his padded chair. "No. I need you. Earth needs you. Never before have I found anyone that I would trust as my successor. You are not like Keltb and the others, here for what they hope to gain. You would be a force for good. Stay, become my adopted son—and rule the world, as your dream foretold. It will all be yours."

This time it was the thin brown hand that reached out, and gripped Puladi's.

"You tempt me, but it is not to be. I must go back."

"Back in time? You cannot." Puladi said what he no longer believed. "It is physically impossible. Rustum Belur told you so."

"Perhaps. But speak the truth, Puladi. You do not think that it is impossible. You think that I can do it."

"No. I do not think you can do it." The touch of the thin hand had turned Puladi's insides to bubbling lava, and suddenly he was filled with an overwhelming knowledge. "I do not think you can go back, I know you can." He gripped hard, fingers quivering. "But if you must go, heal me first. Please, before you leave."

There was a creak from the bed, and the clear brown eyes were inches from Puladi's face. Hands gripped both of his.

"That is not necessary. You are already healed. All that remains is the fear. Before the night has ended, that too will disappear."

"Do not leave me. Please."

"I must. But we will meet again...if you choose. That I promise." He was standing up, moving away. "It is farewell, Puladi, but it need not be goodbye."

The alarm sounded, and Salino came awake in one great spasm of nerves.

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Puladi's monitors! One hour ago they had all shown normal life signs. Now they were jumping all over the screens, out of control, values beyond any range that he had ever seen before. No man could live long with those vital functions.

He scurried across the long space between the inner and outer chambers at a speed dangerously close to triggering the automatic protection system.

The chamber door was open! He ran inside. Puladi was sitting in his wheeled chair. The IV hung uselessly from his arm. He lolled back like a soft dummy. But he was busy. He was engaged on some intricate manipulation of the keypads in his chair. While Salino watched, a bank of directories appeared, then flickered away one by one in a strange nested chain reaction.

"Puladi—what happened to you? What are you doing?" Salino stared around the room. "Where is he?"

"One question at a time," Puladi's dry voice was the faintest whisper. His face was gray and rigid, only the eyes holding life. "Answer number one: I am dying. Number two: I am dismantling the world control system. Number three: he has gone, back where he came from. And I advise you to go somewhere, too, Dr. Salino, while there is still time. I estimate that you have maybe one half hour, before Kelb and friends arrive here."

"I have done nothing to harm them."

Puladi keyed in a new sequence. Five more screens flickered and died. "You are close to me; that is enough. They will certainly kill you."

"You are my patient. I cannot leave."

"I am your patient no longer. I rely on other hands than yours. Go, doctor. I command it."

Salino hesitated, nodded, turned, and ran for the door. On its threshold he spun around and came back to the chair.

"Puladi, let me take you with me! I can hide you. I can save you from them."

The chain in the gray mask was settling to its final rigid position. Puladi's words could barely be understood.

"You are a good man, Salino. But it is not necessary to save me. I am saved. Go now, and save yourself."

The final screens were blinking out as Salino ran. One by one they showed a brief scatter-plot of color, then turned to uniform gray. One picture popped back into existence for a few seconds, a calm wilderness of primeval forest. It revealed no evidence of human activity, no sign even of human existence.

Then it too streaked and flickered on the screen. A moment later it was gone. The overhead lights faded. Only the murmur of a laboring life-support system disturbed the room's silence.

Puladi waited. It was dark, he was alone, and his face was too set to show any expression. No one would ever know that he wanted to smile. □

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Rave Review by Leonard Maltin Open Sun til Midnight

"What would a doctor of the 1800s think of our medical technology? By all his definitions, we are reaching out beyond death and pulling patients back." He smiled, his eyes surveying the suddenly silent audience as this simple truth sunk in. "Time and again, new technologies are now able to save people who once would have been pronounced dead. And because of the present state of medical technology, we are able to freeze dying patients cryogenically—meaning 'at liquid nitrogen temperatures', down to nearly absolute zero—to stop their biological processes totally. We call the whole process cryonics, the technology of low-temperature suspension and, hopefully, revival.

"We at Alcor—the leading cryonics suspension organization—believe that medical technology one day will be able not only to repair the damage caused by the freezing, but to cure what caused the person to die, and even to restore them to full health in a new, youthful body. It's merely an advanced form of that heart-lung machine—we keep them from true death (though frozen) until help arrives.

"In this case," he concluded, "that help will come from the future."

Given a technologically progressive future, and a society of abundance and curing, alternate suspension systems may be invented that abide by the Hippocratic Dictum: "First, do no harm." The state of present cryonic technology and biological knowledge means we have to lay that consideration aside, in favor of "Save what we can, test everything die." So legally—for now, at least—death must be pronounced before the cryonic suspension begins. The sooner the suspension process starts, the better, some brain cells survive the body's death by many minutes. Probably nothing short of supernatural resurrection could bring back a human being whose body has totally rotted away, but between that ultimate state of no-return and the state of the body at the instant of death is a wide twilight region into which cryonics tries to reach and retrieve those whose deaths may be postponed by technology.

The underlying premise of today's cryonics planners is that memory and brain structure determine the individual identity, so that brain tissue preservation is important. Present freezing technology, even with our most advanced forms of antifreeze insertion (called "perfusion") will do significant damage to the brain, so any future revivifiers

must have new knowledge and techniques to repair this damage before trying to thaw out the remainder of the body. Carrying this argument to its logical conclusion, cryonics organizations also offer neurosuspension—freezing of the head alone—a much less costly process that will require those future revivifiers also to grow a new body for the thawed and restored head. Though the medical technology of cloning—growing complete bodies from the DNA resident in cell tissues—will probably develop, to some observers this is too much of a leap of faith. Any process that begins, "First, cut off the patient's head..." is a long way from being accepted by the conventional medical community.

The suspension process begins by pumping the blood from the legally dead patient, replacing it with various kinds of antifreeze agents to protect the tissues of the brain and other organs while the slow transition to near absolute zero temperature begins. The patient is attached to a heart-lung machine during this time, and the body's own fluid delivery system ensures the perfusion of the antifreeze solution throughout the body. A surgical incision in the top of the skull gives the attendant physician visual evidence that the antifreeze has permeated the brain cavity to the desired level.

In stages, the body is taken down to near cryogenic temperatures, wrapped in special insulating sleeping bags, and inserted into an individual cryonics module. Once the body temperature is low enough, this giant thermos bottle—called a Dewar flask—is topped off with liquid nitrogen, ensuring that any and all heat transmitted is taken away. The system requires no other source of cooling.

Given a benign environment—no catastrophe such as a nuclear war or large earthquakes, a sufficient supply of liquid nitrogen, and technicians to carry out the maintenance tasks—the human body thus suspended will undergo no physiological changes. Ever.

"But doesn't the freezing itself kill you?" people ask. By today's definition, yes; by tomorrow's, who knows? Although tests on animal brains show remarkable recovery after low-temperature freezing and thawing, significant damage is likely because of the freezing of water in cell tissues. Ice has more volume than water, and inside a cell the forming ice ruptures cell membranes, pushes aside internal structures, and squeezes out parts and pieces necessary to cell functionality. Without major repair at the level of the cell—and inside it—major damage to the brain (not to mention other organs) is inevitable. On a gross level,

**The underlying premise... is that memory and brain structure determine the individual identity.**

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differential freezing of tissue will result in cracks and crevices, rendering billions of neuronal and synapse connections.

Until recently, even long-time cryonicists had to consider the solution of the repair of cells and brain connections as beyond almost any imaginable technology. What kind of healing technology could conceivably identify and sort out countless broken interconnections, much less repair them? What could we ever invent that would inventory the damage of a human cell, assess the original condition of that cell, and then restore it to its inferred optimal state? Even defining the problem seemed insoluble.

Still, with ultimate faith in the future, some people were cryonically suspended in the 1950s, albeit with primitive technologies and techniques that must have caused massive freezing trauma to the brain and other organs.

Hope for revivification of cryonically-suspended patients came in a most unexpected manner in the form of a 1986 book, *Engines of Creation*, by the engineer K. Eric Drexler. Drexler introduced his concept of *molecular nanotechnology*, a proposed method by which submicroscopic machines would be built. At some temperature above absolute zero, these virus-sized electromechanical microbots would be injected to restore all the original cell structures and nerve connections, as well as curing the original fatal disease or accident.

To skeptics, this is not an impressive argument. Now, they say, cryonicists are depending upon yet another totally new technology to be developed. What guarantee is there that nanotechnology will work, that microbots will ever be built to do such tasks? At this point, the true cryonicist will respond, "There are no guarantees, except that you will truly die if you are not cryonically suspended. Isn't life worth that chance?"

But cryobiology—the study of life subjected to very low temperatures—gives some indication that cryonics is on the right track. Human sperm, fertilized ova, and even embryos have been deep-frozen and revived, so that on a small scale, at least, suspension and revivification have already been successful. So far the limits, if any, to cryonics have yet to be reached.

A practicing cryobiologist who has thoroughly reviewed cryonics literature, Dr. Greg Fahy, though not advocating cryonic suspension, nonetheless has published a detailed analysis of the kinds of damage cryonics freezing would likely cause and has developed a specific sequence of tasks that future microbots would have to accomplish to bring people back to life and health. Citing numerous references from the cryobiological journals, he is optimistic that—given advances in nanotechnology that enable sophisticated microbots to be invented and to work as he envisions—there are relatively straightforward and logical processes imaginable that would enable future medical en-

gineers to thaw out and reconnect nerve connections and rebuild individual cells.

The secret to fixing these cracks in a frozen brain and other tissues is to have microbots scan both sides of a fracture, mapping the surfaces molecule-by-molecule and sending this information to an advanced computer. By checking which molecule on each side of the abyss physically fits with which other one—like solving a three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle—the previous connections can be inferred.

Each surface is then coated with new atoms as a kind of plaster cast, and new nerve fibers are grown across the gap, remaking the original connections. Microbots then remove the extra material and dispose of it safely. Upon safely thawing back to body temperature, these fissures will grow back together naturally. A similar scenario would take place inside individual cells, to repair or replace damaged and missing parts.

Dr. Fahy says that tests with animal brains, and with thin sections of recently-dead human brains, show that brain tissue has a vast capacity for recovery. Once brought to a state of health, the cells "know what they ought to be doing" and then do it.

By the admission of today's cryonicists, current practices are primitive, but the alternative, they feel, is real, irreversible death. As suspension technologies are perfected, it is likely that revolutionary advances will occur as they have in every other field of medicine. For example, given the mind-boggling power of foreseeable nanocomputers—"a Cray on a Chip"—and the equally astounding capabilities of future nanosized sensors and imaging instruments, it may be possible that the CAT scans of the near future will produce a microscopic—even molecular—map of the brain and store the information digitally. It may even be possible to keep this chip within the patient's body upon freezing, so that future revivers would have on hand a nearly-perfect template upon which to restore the original brain to operation.

Extending this concept even further, given enough nanotech progress, it can be imagined that one would have an on-board set of nanoelectronics that continuously monitors and updates that brain map in real time, so that even the last moments of memory before death can be recalled. If this brain information were to be transferred to another brain, either a clone or another person's, would this be the original person? Or is the original "meat" structure necessary? In the next century such questions will be of world-

wide importance. And lawyers, as always, will have plenty of work to do....

"The First Man" frozen was Dr. James H. Bedford, who "deaminated" on January 12, 1967, and whose cryonically-suspended body was transferred into a higher-tech capsule in 1991 by Alcor personnel in Riverside, California. A quick examination of the body showed that it was still properly frozen and apparently had not changed at all in those 25 years—before some of the Alcor team had even been born!

With all the positive biological evidence to date, eventually Dr. Bedford or another frozen person—there are now at least 17 in Alcor Dewars alone, with probably thousands to follow—will be thawed and revivification tried. Hopefully it will work; hopefully there will be no untoward side effects. The possible socio-economic effects of such cryonization (as I have deemed it)

are another matter, the impact of near immortality for the whole human race a problem for SF writers (for now).

So to the optimistic, the future holds the nearcertainty of revived cryonic patients. But why should anyone else invest the time and money—around \$50,000 for "neuro-suspension," about \$150,000 for whole body suspension—on such a gamble? As the cryonicists are fond of saying at this point, "Well, we all know the penalty for not trying suspension."

But do we? Just as those ancient Egyptian "suspension technicians" (priests) were sure that the brain they removed with long hooks through their patient's nose had no significance in the planned afterworld rebirth of their charges, could it also be possible that a human being is more than the physical brain and its cell structure, that cryogenic freezing might not store everything one needs for true resurrection?

Might not there be some kind of physical interactive relationship of human consciousness with the Earth's magnetic field, with unknown cosmic structures, or even with each other? As individuals, might we also be cells in the body of a Greater Humanity? Might the near universal impulse to religion be a recognition indeed of transcendent non-biological components? One doesn't have to be religious to have such suspicions.

Consider: five years ago, when leading cryonicists requested—nay, demanded—that the beloved SF writer Robert A. Heinlein undergo cryonic suspension, he demurred, preferring to sail into his sunset naturally.

"What if," Heinlein asked, "freezing interferes with the afterlife?" □

## Until recently cryonicists had to consider the repair of cells and brain connections as beyond any imaginable technology.



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This beautiful painting by scientific artist Al Kamajian provides us with a window to this distant era. Painstakingly researched, Kamajian uses a process that involves creating a scale wire skeleton, sculpting a replica of Deinonychus on it, and photographing these models before the actual painting is begun.

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## GAMES

By Rick Hautala

### H.R. Giger's alien nightmares invade your computer in *Darkseed*.

*Darkseed*, based on the paintings of surrealist H.R. Giger, shows us that beyond the world we know there lives something alien. Cover art by Giger. BELOW: The game in action.



**P**ERHAPS CONNOISSEURS OF THE FANTASTIC BECAME acquainted with the work of Swiss artist H.R. Giger through his remarkable book *Necronomicon*, but a mass audience was introduced to this man's remarkable vision through his design work for the film *Alien*. A landmark movie, no question, and one result of its success was a great deal of deserved attention and international acclaim for this remarkable artist.

Now Cyberdreams of California has unleashed a new creation based upon Giger's singular vision, a computer game called *Darkseed*, which uses digitized renditions of Giger's artwork as the background—no, that's too weak a word, as the environment for a computer adventure. Cyberdreams invested \$600,000 and six person-years to transfer Giger's surreal artwork from the canvas to the computer screen for this, the company's first software product to be released.

The basic setup for the game is quite simple, and may seem rather clichéd to regular readers of dark fantasy. Mike Dawson, a partner in a successful ad agency in San Francisco, really wants to get away from it all so he can write. He purchases a

house—slight unseen—in secluded Woodland Hills, California and moves in.

The problem is, there is something definitely strange about this particular house and possibly the whole town. Exactly what is wrong and how to go about stopping it is the whole point of the game.

If *Alien* was essentially a haunted house story set in space, *Darkseed* is essentially a "haunted space" story set in a house. Mike Dawson must discover what's going on. That entails several journeys to the "dark world," a nightmare alien universe accessed through a mysterious portal inside Mike's house. Finding the portal and operating it is the first major objective of the game.

*Darkseed* runs on a very simple point and click interface. There are three game controls—an arrow, a hand, and a question mark. You move the arrow around the screen until it changes to a pattern of four inward-pointing arrows, which identifies a doorway or other exit point. If you move the question mark around, it will turn into an exclamation point to indicate a useful (or sometimes useless) item. The hand changes to a pointing finger when you can pick something up and use it.

This all sounds pretty simple, and it is, but in contrast to the artwork resolution, the animation is not very smooth. At times, Mike does a funky little back-spin dance that, I suppose, simulates walking, but it looks rather funny. However, it didn't take long to get used to it. Certainly the game play is easy to manipulate, and the controls are not difficult to understand.

What is difficult to understand is the "how and the why," the basic purpose of the game.

What the hell is going on here? Every morning, Mike awakens with a splitting headache. If he doesn't do something about it—fast—he's incapacitated for the rest of the day. The solution to this problem is relatively easy and makes perfect sense; but for many parts of the game, in order to progress, the player must do things that make little—if any—sense in the real world.

I have to give away one little secret to illustrate my point. On the first day, after exploring his new house and its surroundings, Mike eventually discovers a length of rope in a hidden room. Now, any adventure gamer worth his salt knows that you need a rope for climbing up and down things such as deep wells or whatever.

But what is Mike Dawson meant to do with it?

After finding his way out onto the upper balcony of his house, he is supposed to tie the rope around the gargoyles at the edge of the balcony so he can climb up and down.

Does this make sense?

Well, sure it does later on in the game, when Mike has to get back into his house, and the main door is inaccessible. That good ole' length of rope hanging

*Continued on page 80*



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## COMICS

By Damian Kilby

### Vertigo's *Last One* shows that immortality may not be all it's cracked up to be.



*Myrwan, the Last One, will live forever, and Dan Sweetman's painted artwork is worthy of an immortal.*

**T**HE LAST ONE, NEW FROM DC'S VERTIGO LINE of mature audience comics, is a fully painted comic book. To eyes long accustomed to the shorthand of flat, ink line drawings in traditional comics, the painted ones can appear shockingly rich at first—and fascinating, to be sure—each page weighted down with a density of color, texture and technique. These comics are still relatively rare on the racks; they are more expensive and aimed at the more sophisticated readers. The *Last One* should, indeed, appeal to an audience ready for a sophisticated fantasy story. It is centered around a being of mythical stature and mixes a touch of poetry in with an honest look at some of the more difficult sides of the human condition.

Painted comics are more likely to have the feel of a work of art. The full palette opens up a range of possibilities, thereby providing the illustrator with more opportunities to create a work of individual expression. This is certainly true of Dan Sweetman's work on *The Last One*. He uses a warm spectrum of thickly applied color to build up a dreamy kind of tension. Sweetman is at his most stunning on pages where symbolism and mythology take over from the straight narrative.

There's a grittiness in the art too, especially in scenes of a rainy New York City. Yet, always, the ever shifting shades of color keep the viewer in a dreamy, magical state of mind. Here or there one painted panel will blur into the next, but throughout Sweetman manages to keep up a strong sense of visual freshness from page to page. His work is all the more impressive when we consider that for painted comics there is very little in the

way of a tradition of techniques and visual conventions for the artist to fall back on.

The *Last One*'s writer and creator, J.M. De Matteis, has already been linked to a number of painted comics. His work includes the script on the recent graphic novel *Merry* (also from Vertigo), which was as much a free form meditation on the nature of the human heart as it was a story; and the critically well-received *Moonshadow: A Fairy Tale For Grown Ups*, a painted comic dating way back to the mid-'80s, which featured humorous adventure through both outer and inner space.

In the opening issue of *The Last One*, De Matteis establishes a basic premise that is simple, elegant and mythically resonant. Myrwan is a magical, sexually ambiguous creature of light. A leftover, a holdout in our age of darkness, whose origin lies in a nameless "Time before... when God lived so deep in every heart that He didn't even have a Name." Somehow this *Last One* has held out through all the darkness of human history long after all else from that distant Golden Age has faded away. Myrwan has plugged on, trying to nurture the spark of love and goodness wherever he/she can. Now the *Last One* lives in New York's East Village, taking in stray young people whose lives have spun out of control, but who still have dreams that can be nurtured. It is now, in modern times, that Myrwan's spirit and sanity have finally been stretched to the breaking point under the strain of the endless struggle against the darkness.

The story tags into one of the basic archetypes that powers the appeal of a lot of fantasy fiction. Don't we all long for some lost Golden Age? A time of magic that is almost forgotten, but not quite? Perhaps it represents some golden core of early childhood innocence. Maybe it's the touch of pure Zen being, usually clouded over by all our anxieties and ambitions. Whatever the source of this longing, De Matteis has put his finger right on the pulse of the archetype. He adds to the power of this by turning the fantasy spotlight back onto the real world problems of realistic, recognizable characters.

By its very nature the Golden Age is a vague, ill-defined concept and thus the magical nature of Myrwan, the holdout from that time, threatens to remain equally unclear. Will any boundaries or rules apply to Myrwan's magical presence? Vagueness surrounding his/her nature and powers could grow frustrating over the course of a full story, leaving the reader with a sense of the author's hand arbitrarily creating whatever suits the needs of the plot at any given time.

With all due respect to the work done in *The Last One*, I can't resist viewing it in light of groundwork laid out in the comic book *The Sandman*, brainchild of writer Neil Gaiman and the most universally acclaimed mature comic book series yet. The basic structure of *Sandman* seems to have served as a kind of template in the creation of *The Last One*.

*Sandman* features stories which all in some way in-

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volve an anthropomorphic manifestation of  
Dream, who is but one of "the Endless," a  
small pantheon of immortals which includes  
the likes of Desire, Delusion and Death. Simi-  
larly, *The Last One* features an immortal  
character of mythic proportions—as much a  
manifestation of an idea as a person—who  
can appear in many different guises and play  
many different roles. The structure of both  
comics allows for stories that can take place  
in any time or place throughout human history,  
or even outside of history, in other-  
worldly realms.

*The Last One* diverges from the *Sandman*  
template in creative and constructive ways.  
Unlike the character of Dream, Myrwan has  
a more singular motivating force—his  
ongoing struggle to hold onto the spark of the  
golden, magical past. This can be used to draw  
a much stronger connective line through all of  
Myrwan's tales and provide a thematic ground-  
ing for the entire series. A greater clarity of purpose  
allows the reader to more easily grasp the signifi-  
cance of each individual story and gives a pleasing  
shape to the larger arc of tales.

Furthermore, as writer De Matteis has estab-  
lished *The Last One*, the comic has a  
much more human focus, pointing its way  
toward the core of our own daily struggles.  
*Sandman* tends to be as much about story-  
telling and myth-creating itself as it is about  
character. Myrwan's struggle is one which  
goes on inside the hearts of us all and the  
Last One's mode of operation is to enter  
other people's lives at the most personal  
level. In his remarking of the original tem-  
plate, De Matteis promises to deliver stories  
that play with the fascinating stuff of per-  
sonal sanity and morality. Let us hope that  
this risk-taking writer doesn't fall back on  
using too many pre-made clichés about  
heart-rending social ills.

Hopefully the mature lines of comics are  
gaining momentum, here to stay and grow.  
*The Last One* is helping to expand and ex-  
plore the uses of a newly formed model. The  
quality of the writing, intensified by the  
uniqueness of the art, proves that it is possi-  
ble for mature comics to break free with a  
growing tradition of their own. □

## OTHER COMICS OF INTEREST

• Fans of gonzo science fiction would be  
wise to check out Mike Allred's *Madman*  
*Adventures* from Tundra (\$2.95, 32 pages,  
color). The original adventures of this surreal  
superhero proved so popular that not only  
did the three books of his original series  
sell out, but a film may now be in the  
works, and Allred has been tapped to re-  
vamp one of DC Comics' cult heroes, Brother  
Power. The Geek. *Madman*, a twisted hybrid  
of Herbie, Indiana Jones, and the Flaming  
Carrot, tells the story of a naive, amnesiac  
experiment subject turned superhero, who  
battles for his memory at the same time as  
he uses his indefatigable yo-yo to defeat  
street beatniks, mad scientists, and a laser-

armed robot. *Madman*'s tip-of-the-hat tagline  
to the classic description of the Fantastic  
Four is "The world's snazziest adventure  
series," and this time, the claim may be cor-  
rect. Mike Allred is the comics' answer to the  
controlled insanity of Howard Waldrop.

• For those of us with long enough memo-  
ries the best SF comics were put out by EC,  
such as *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy*.  
Decades later, someone else is trying to  
recreate some of the old EC magic with *Di-  
mension X* (Karl Art Publishing, 36 b&w  
pages, color cover, \$3.50), created and writ-  
ten by Michael Louis Luck and Barry Allan  
Kraus. The book contains three comic sto-  
ries plus one illustrated text feature. The art  
is by the likes of John Ridgway, Estaban  
Maroto, Nestor Redondo and Kyle Baker.  
Ridgway's art for the first story evokes the  
spirit of Reed Crandall, while Baker's unique  
penwork for the final story provides a wel-  
come expressive relief from the photo-real-  
ists who feel that cartoonists must replicate  
a camera. The publisher states that the se-  
cond issue of *Dimension X* will be an EC re-  
union, featuring all new art by Al Williamson,  
Joe Orlando, Johnny Craig and others. While  
no one could outdo EC at its own game, *Di-  
mension X* is a worthy attempt.

• Genre didn't exist when Mary Shelley sat  
down and wrote *Frankenstein* in 1818. These  
days, fans of genre debate whether the clas-  
sic novel is primarily a SF novel tinged with  
horror or a horror novel colored with SF.  
Now the movie version of that book has been  
adapted in a fully painted comic book  
recreation by Dan Beavals. *Universal Pic-  
tures: Frankenstein* (Dark Horse, square-  
bound, 48 pages, painted cover, \$3.95)  
faithfully takes its story directly from the  
screenplay, telling the tale of the classic mad  
scientist who dares in things man was not  
meant to know. We hope that this book  
spells just the beginning of adaptations of  
other classic Universal SF pictures.

• *Strange Attractors* (RetrowGrafix, 32  
pages, b&w, \$2.50), written by Mark Sher-  
man and Michael Cohen and drawn by  
Cohen, packs a novel's worth of story into  
its first issue. The book has a Heinlein-esque  
feel as it mixes space opera and soap opera  
with its story of Sophie, curator of the Mu-  
seum of Lost Things on the asteroid city of  
Sisyphus, and her lover, Meson, who is ap-  
parently an unwilling conspirator to topple a  
government. Into this mix comes Sophie's  
best friend, Widow, recent graduate of the  
Rangerette Academy on Callisto. The first  
issue sows the seeds for a war between Sci-  
ence and Magic and is full of van Vogtian  
paranoia. An intriguing bit of subplot is that  
Sophie bases her interpersonal relationships  
on old comic books, modeling herself on Pi-  
rate Peg and Nurse Nebula from the pages  
of issues of *Spicy Space Stories* she finds in  
the Museum's endless rooms. With that idea,  
*Strange Attractors* raises SF comics to Emily  
Post, which doesn't seem like a bad idea.

S.E.

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## TEZCATLIPOCA BLUES

Continued from page 41

From deep within, Beto said, "Sumato sumato tricksterization well done ditty-whardity papamamowow."

Phoebe cradled him in her arms and cried, "Phoebe-babe?" Caldonia said through the phone.

"Caldonia? What happened here?" "We may have saved the whole recomboid world. Come to my place and I'll explain."

A BLEACHED-BLONDE ASIO REPORTER SMILED at the camera and said, "Due to the mental breakdown of Smokey Espejo, aka Beto Orozco, the highly anticipated global satellite concert scheduled for the beginning of the final night of Dead Daze 2009 has been cancelled. No explanation for the breakdown can be found; Orozco himself is unable to articulate."

Cutting to tape, a voiceover asked Beto, "Why did you do it?"

Beto smiled a Tezcatlipoca smile. "Motivation obvious. Don't you see it? Mediasphere alive alive oh now. Got gods soul attitude. Awomphombulua abombambom oohoooh ahh tingtang wallwalla bing bang!"

PHOEBE AND CALDONIA STEGGLED, ARMS around each other's waists, down Sunset Boulevard, into the smog-enhanced sunset.

"But Smokey didn't seem anything like Beto," said Phoebe.

"That's because he was possessed," said Caldonia. "But the encounter with the goddess laid Xochitl's control elements on Smokey, so we won't have to worry about that happening again."

"Too bad, he was so sumato."

"And I don't get anything for saving you from him?"

Phoebe brought her face close to Caldonia's and said, "This is so Hollywood. A real happy ending." Caldonia gave her a sizzling, wide-screen kiss.

IN THE DOWNTOWN L.A. MAGLEV STATION, Xochitl was being paged.

Tezcatlipoca appeared on the courtesy phone and said:

"You do this programming-tricksterism well, Xochitlita. It's an interesting game. I'm getting good at it. It's only a matter of time before I figure out a way to get around your control programming. Meanwhile, I'm bringing other gods and goddesses to life here in the mediasphere to keep me company—I haven't seen my brother Quetzalcoatl in ages. We'll play again soon."

"Oh, my God," said Xochitl.

IN HIS CELL IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA at Cucamonga Medical Center's psychiatric wing, Beto chanted, "I am Quetzalcoatl, I am Quetzalcoatl, I am Quetzalcoatl...." □



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## GAMES

Continued from page 74

from the balcony comes in handy as an alternate way to get in and out of the house.

My question is: How does Mike (or the player) know to do this? If Mike has no idea what's going on, why does he do such an unusual thing? Who is going to be clambering up and down the side of the house on a rope during his first inspection of his new house?

At several points throughout the game, in fact, the protagonist has to do things that just plain old don't make any sense in the real world. What does Mike have to do simply to get a shovel? Aye caramba! You won't believe it! And even though midway through the game he has in his inventory a shovel and a crowbar, neither one of them will get him out of jail.

The manual says some of the logic to the puzzles may be hard to follow. Boy, is that ever right! They're the kinds of things you'd only think about doing while playing a computer game...maybe. I'm sure there must be ways to make the solutions to puzzles more integral to what's going on in the game.

But there's an even more basic problem with *Darkseed*.

It isn't really a "game" at all; it's a puzzle or secret code that you have to break. To beat *Darkseed*, all you have to do is crack the code, pick the (very complicated) set of locks, as it were, that the designers have thrown at you. Of course, this is typical of most role-playing games. But wait: there's more.

Besides having to think of and do some rather odd things in exactly the right order with no margin for error, you also have a built-in time limit.

The town, you see, is being terrorized by...well, something, so all the local businesses shut down by 6:00 p.m. If you don't get to the library or store on time—well, tough luck. Just hope you can get what you need during the next day. Early in the game, you have to find a pocket watch with which you keep track of the time as each "day" passes. If Mike isn't safe at home and tucked into bed at a reasonable hour, say 9 or 10 p.m., he drops in his tracks and sleeps on the sidewalk or whatever.

If you mess up and the game ends—and you can make plenty of fatal...no, worse than fatal mistakes—you're dumped out and have to go through the whole startup before you can get going again. Sure, you can save your game in progress, but going through all the opening design credits every time soon becomes a pain.

In spite of this headache (and it's certainly not as serious as Mike Dawson's headaches), *Darkseed* does give you the dual challenge of trying to crack the secret code within a limited amount of time.

That could have made for a fun and challenging game, but for me it seemed to add

up to more frustration than fun.

Now I don't want to sound like I'm just coming down hard on this game, because there is much to recommend it.

First and foremost, of course, is Giger's artwork. The paintings, some with minimal animation, create within the game a very disturbing science fictional, alien atmosphere; and believe me, it works. I won't reveal the ultimate goal of the game, but as you wander through the "dark world," you'll encounter some marvelous renderings of Giger's art.

And speaking of atmosphere, even before you get to see Giger's "dark world," the events within Mike's house have a very disturbing feel to them. There's a strong Lovecraftian mood to the game. While I was playing it, I felt more like I was in haunted New England than California.

So if you can accept the basic premise and go with it (and that's a demand made by any computer game, really), you actually do begin to feel involved in this strange house and its even stranger alien, bio-mechanical alternate world. As you travel back and forth between dimensions, you realize that what you do in the world has serious repercussions in the other. One door opened in the real world opens another door in the alternate world.

*Darkseed* was recently awarded a 1993 Software Publishers Association Excellence in Software Award, taking the honors in the Best Fantasy-Adventure category. The award, voted on by the folks who make computer games, is a peer award similar to the Oscars. But it seems that the public has spoken as well, for Dave Gerding of Cyberdreams tells us that the game is so popular that a sequel is in the works, one in which both the storyline and the gameplay logic will be improved over this first edition. I guess you'll just have to make up your own mind. □

## RECENT AND RECOMMENDED GAMES

Hot on the heels of the second edition of West End Games' *Star Wars* role-playing adventure system, the Pennsylvania-based games manufacturer has released three modules that expand the George Lucas universe.

Wanted by Crochen details the database compiled by General Airen Crocken to deal with the increased criminal activities that have arisen since the Battle of Endor and the death of the Emperor. It contains all the descriptive information necessary to play each character, biographical information, role-playing strategy, adventure ideas, and a full listing of all Bounty Hunters, Assassins, Mercenaries, Spies and other assorted riff-raff on the most wanted list.

Twins *Stars of Kira* are the points at either end of the Kira Run, where smugglers and free traders seek profit and adventure in hyperspace. Seven mini-adventures, accompanied by gamemaster read-alouds and player handouts, will have you encountering secret Imperial bases, cruising alien



continues, and battling space pirates.

*Galaxy Guide & Scouts* takes you to the outer limits of the galaxy, where there are no maps and nothing can be taken for granted. You'll play a scout, whose mission will take him to unknown star systems, primitive civilizations, and lost colonies. In addition to his mini-adventures, the module also contains information on designing new planets and natural hazards, as well as a detailed alien generation system for devising unique species.

Each of these books is a 96 page trade paperback with a list price of \$15.00 and is designed to be used in conjunction with *Star Wars: The Role-playing Game*.

"It's a simple game," one character is quoted as saying in *Talisanta: Third Edition Guidebook* (Wizards of the Coast, 344 pages, trade paper, \$20.00). "The two of us fight. Whoever remains standing at the end is the winner."

Actually, battle is far more complex in this magical post-disaster world, its territories and people described in a massive volume so rich with information that even non-role-players will enjoy reading it. The world of *Talisanta* is not your standard elves and dwarves cookie-cutter fantasy world. *Talisanta* is populated with unusual races such as the tattooed Thrall warriors and the dual-brained Sindarian, who move through a well-thought-out treacherous environment. The guidebook has the loving detail of the strange worlds of Jack Vance, to whose unique brand of fantasy this volume is dedicated.

The index and glossary allow the reader to find the information he or she needs quickly, from Black Lightning to Enchanted Crystals to Morphous Pools. As much an encyclopedia as a role-playing game, readers, writers, and role-players alike will find it worth the investment.

• Half game, half illustrated encyclopedia, *Orbits* (Software Marketing Corporation) is a computer guide to our solar system for IBM PCs and clones. It is filled with sophisticated visuals derived from actual satellite photographs, as well as detailed textual information about the nine planets of our home system, as well as the sun, asteroids belt, comets, moons and so forth. *Orbits'* combination of words and pictures is particularly effective when dealing with subjects such as the sun's multi-billion year life cycle, or a simulation of the orbits of the inner and outer planets.

The game aspect of this educational software enters with the Solar Shuffle, which turns any of its many screens into a scrambled jigsaw puzzle which has to be solved, and with Orbit-Tek, an orbital simulator that puts you in control of a near Earth mission. *Orbits* will also print out statistical reports comparing the planets of our solar system which will be helpful to students once report time swings around again. *Orbits* is highly recommended; it will turn your PC into a personal planetarium.

Trevor S. Vartanoff

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The July/Sep issue will feature artwork from Star Trek: Generations, rare promotional Star Trek sets as well as an exclusive promotional card. Also included will be a Jurassic Park promotional card. This issue will be available July 1 with subscriptions.

**Star Wars**

The April/Jun issue featured a stunning cover and 2 promotional cards from Topps Star Wars Galaxy card set. This back issue is available while supplies last.

**Star Trek**

Last year's April/Jun issue featured 4 promotional cards from Star Trek: Star Trek: The Next Generation card set and also included an interview with Walter Koenig. This back issue is available while supplies last.

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## CONTRIBUTORS

**P** IERS ANTHONY SPENDS SO MUCH time on the bestseller lists of The New York Times that a short story from him is a rare pleasure.

It has been 30 years since his first story, "Possible to Run," first appeared, but since then he has become best known for his punning series. His Xanth and Apprentice Adept novels have sold millions of copies. Interest in his life and works is so high that not only is he one of the few authors to publish a mass market autobiography (Bio of an Ogre), but he is the only SF or fantasy author to have his own 800 phone number for sales of his merchandise (1-800-HI-PIERS).

In addition to his nearly 100 scientific articles, Charles Sheffield has since 1977 published over 80 short stories. His second novel *The Web Between the Stars* became famous in 1979 for its depiction of a sky-book space elevator, coming out at the same time as Arthur C. Clarke's treatment of the same device, proving that great minds think alike. His fans are anxiously awaiting his completion of the next volume in his Heritage Universe series, which has so far included *Summertime*, *Divergence*, and *Transcendence*.

Ernest Hogan's novels and short stories have long demonstrated a fascination with extrapolative fiction regarding a future melting pot in which cultures combine. His novels *Cortez on Jupiter* and *High Aztec* each deal with the power of the street in a unique future patois that illuminates the country we may yet become.

Fred DeVita made his art debut in a Miami underground newspaper in 1968, which led to his first illustration commission from the Aquarian Banana Agency. He is classically trained, studying under Spanish artist Roberto Martinez. His art assignments have included the *Time-Life* series *Understanding Computers* and *Voyage Through the Universe*, plus a stint with the graphics department at ABC news. His current interests include 3-D graphic design and animation.

Terry Bisson spent the first 10 years of his career publishing novels, but when the '90s arrived, so did Bisson's unique short fic-

tion. His "Bears Discover Fire" is already a classic and swept the Hugo, Nebula and Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Awards for 1990. His first short story collection, also titled *Bears Discover Fire*, will be out in the fall from Tor Books.

Annie Lunsford has been freelancing since 1976. She won't reveal her age, only that she was "born after swing and before rock-and-roll." If you notice that she fancies the color purple in her illustrations, note that she is a purple freak—she once owned a purple Austin-Healey. The latest assignment for this self-taught artist is the cover for a CD and cassette of the next release by folksinger Kathy Fink from A&M Records.



Annie Lunsford



Rick Shelley

**B** ESTSELLING NOVELS BY RICK Hauntala are proving so popular that he may soon be known as Maine's most famous horror writer. His 10th novel, *Ghost Light*, will be out in October, telling the suspenseful tale of a psychopath hunting for the woman who kidnapped his children. He is currently hard at work on the next tome, titled *Twilight Time*.

*Until Released*, Rick Shelley's first book in a new military SF series, will be out from Ace Books in 1994, while *The Wizard at Mercy*, the first book in his new fantasy series, will be published by Roc early next year. If he pushes himself, the second book in each series may also be out in 1994. To add some more fuel to the SF vs. Fantasy fire, this Tennessee writer tell us that he thinks that "SF is better in short lengths and fantasy better in book-length."

Paul Di Filippo recently sold a collection of three novellas to literary press Four Walls Eight Windows. He took part in *Unspeaking Practices*, a celebration of avant garde fiction held at Brown University.

Dan Perez' most recent fiction sale was the short story "The Man Who Like Poe" to *Cemetery Dance*. His story "The Smoking Mirror" will be part of a special *Horror Writers of America* collaborative anthology, *Deathport*, due out from Pocket Books in September. Book editors take note that he recently signed with agent Shawna McCarthy.



Piers Anthony



Ernest Hogan

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